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VOICES
FROM
THE MOUNTAINS.

BY
CHARLES MACKAY,

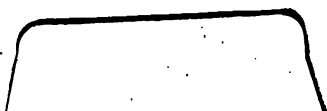
AUTHOR OF
"COCKED AND KEPT," "LOVE OF LION," ETC., ETC.

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Voices from the Mountains.

BY

CHARLES MACKAY,

Second Edition.



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CONTENTS.



MOUNTAIN STREAMS	<i>Page</i>	1
MELODIES AND MYSTERIES		4
THE MAN IN THE DEAD SEA		6
THE FOLLOWER	..	..	..	..	..		15
WE ARE WISER THAN WE KNOW	..	..	..	..	..		20
THE CHILD AND THE MOURNERS,	..	..	..	..	..		22
THE WATER TARANTELLA..	..	..	..	..	..		25
THE EARTH AND THE STARS	..	..	..	..	..		30
THE YOUNG EARTH	..	..	..	..	..		32
THE GOLDEN MADNESS	..	..	..	..	..		37
THE OUT-COMER AND THE IN-GOER	..	..	..	..	..		41
THE DROP OF AMBROSIA ..	..	..	..	..	..		46
NOW	..	..	..	..	..		49
THE VISION OF MOCKERY	..	..	..	..	..		52
THE KING AND THE NIGHTINGALES	..	..	..	..	..		61
EVERMORE—NEVERMORE ..	..	..	..	..	..		65
THE TRUE COMPANION	..	..	..	..	..		67

WELCOME BACK	68
A LOVER'S FANCIES	70
THE NINE BATHERS	71
TWO MYSTERIES	77
THE CONFESSION OF AHAUUEKUS	78
A BEVERIE IN THE GRASS	88
LOVE OR WISDOM.. .. .	92
FOLLOW YOUR LEADER	95
THE DEATH BANQUET OF THE GIBONDINS	98



Voices from the Mountains.

MOUNTAIN STREAMS.

AN ASPIRATION FROM TOWN.

WHAT time the fern puts forth its rings,
What time the early thristle sings,
I love to fly the murky town,
And tread the moorlands, bare and brown ;
From greenest level of the glens
To barest summit of the Bens,
To trace the torrents where they flow,
Serene or brawling, fierce or slow ;
To linger pleased, and loiter long,
A silent listener to their song.

Farewell, ye streets ! Again I'll sit
On crags to watch the shadows flit ;
To list the buzzing of the bee,
Or branches waving like a sea ;
To hear far off the cuckoo's note,
Or lark's clear carol high afloat,

And find a joy in every sound,
Of air, the water, or the ground ;
Of fancies full, though fixing nought,
And thinking—heedless of my thought.

Farewell! and in the teeth of care
I'll breathe the buxom mountain air,
Feed vision upon dyes and hues
That from the hill-top interfuse,
White rocks, and lichens born of spray,
Dark heather-tufts, and mosses grey,
Green grass, blue sky, and boulders brown,
With amber waters glistening down,
And early flowers, blue, white, and pink,
That fringe with beauty all the brink.

Farewell, ye streets! Beneath an arch
Of drooping birch or feathery larch,
Or mountain-ash, that o'er it bends,
I'll watch some streamlet as it wends ;
Some brook whose tune its course betrays,
Whose verdure tracks its hidden ways—
Verdure of trees and bloom of flowers,
And music fresher than the showers,
Soft dripping where the tendrils twine ;
And all its beauty shall be mine.

Ay, mine, to bring me joy and health,
And endless store of mental wealth—
Wealth ever given to hearts that warm
To loveliness of sound or form,

And that can see in Nature's face
A hope, a beauty, and a grace—
That in the city or the woods,
In thoroughfares or solitudes,
Can live their life at Nature's call,
Despising nothing, loving all.

Sweet streams, that over summits leap,
Or fair in rock-hewn basins sleep ;
That foaming burst in bright cascades,
Or toy with cowslips in the shades ;
That shout till earth and sky grow mute,
Or tinkle lowly as a lute ;
That sing a song of lusty joy,
Or murmur like a love-lorn boy ;
That creep or fall, that flow or run—
I dote upon you every one.

For many a day of calm delight,
And hour of pleasure stol'n from night ;
For morning freshness, joy of noon,
And beauty rising with the moon ;
For health, encrimsoner of cheeks,
And wisdom gain'd on mountain-peaks ;
For inward light from Nature won,
And visions gilded by the sun ;
For fancies fair and waking dreams—
I love you all, ye mountain streams.

MELODIES AND MYSTERIES.

WOULDST thou know what the blithe bird pipeth,
High in the morning air?
Wouldst thou know what the bright stream singeth,
Rippling o'er pebbles bare?
Sorrow the mystery shall teach thee,
And the words declare.

WOULDST thou find in the rose's blossom
More than thy fellows find?
More in the fragrance of the lily
Than odour on the wind?
Love Nature, and her smallest atoms
Shall whisper to thy mind.

WOULDST thou know what the moon discourseth
To the docile sea?
Wouldst hear the echoes of the music
Of the far infinity?
Sorrow shall ope the founts of knowledge,
And heaven shall sing to thee.

WOULDST thou see through the riddle of Being
Further than others can?
Sorrow shall give thine eyes new lustre
To simplify the plan;
And love of God and thy kind shall aid thee
To end what it began.

To Love and Sorrow all Nature speaketh;
If the riddle be read,
They the best can see through darkness
Each divergent thread
Of its mazy texture, and discover
Whence the ravel spread.

Love and Sorrow are sympathetic
With the earth and skies;
Their touch from the harp of Nature bringeth
The hidden melodies;
To them the eternal chords for ever
Vibrate in harmonies.



THE MAN IN THE DEAD SEA.

AN APOLOGUE.

WALKING on the Dead Sea shore,
Meditating evermore,
Underneath the burning ray
Of intolerable day,
I beheld a fearful thing—
 Bloody deed as e'er was done,
Wrought, unblushing, unrelenting,
 In the presence of the sun.

Fair, and young, and bright was he,
Who that morning walk'd with me
By the margin of the sea ;
Calm, and eloquent, and wise,
 Radiant in immortal youth ;
Knowledge sparkled in his eyes,
 From his forehead living truth.
He was a youth indeed divine,
A master and a friend of mine,
For whose dear sake I would have given
All on the mortal side of heaven.

We talk'd together and paced along ;
We did no mortal creature wrong ;
And sometimes sitting on the sands,
 Or on the jutting rocks below,
He look'd at me, and clasp'd my hands,
 And told me things I ought to know—

Things of heaven and things of earth,
Things of wisdom and of mirth ;
The wisdom cheerful, the mirth most wise,
And both brimful of mysteries.

There came a woman by the way—
A stately woman, proud and strong ;
Her robe of purple velvet shone,
Like a starry night, with precious stone,
And trail'd the sands as she swept along.
She wore a dagger at her side,
Jewel-hilted, bright, and keen :
You might have told, by her crown of gold,
This gorgeous woman was a queen ;
But more by her eyes, that flash'd the fire
Of one accustom'd to control ;
To rule in awe, and give the law
That binds the body and the soul.
And, in her train, there follow'd her
A well-arm'd troop of stalwart men,
So bloody and bare, I do not care
Ever to see their like again.

My friend arose and look'd at her ;
Calm and beautiful he stood,
With such magnificence of eye
As God but gives unto the good.
She scowl'd at him ; each quivering limb
In all her body spake her wrath ;
And her fearful tongue loud curses flung
At the mild presence in her path.

"Monster of evil ! fiend of guile !

What brings thee here to blast my sight ?
But since thou darest, in the day,
To meet and brave me in the way,
We'll try thy power—we'll know thy right."

"Lady," he said, and mildly spoke,

While heavenly beauty lit his face,
"My God hath made me what I am,
And given me an abiding-place ;
And if my presence please thee not,
The world is wide—thou need'st not come
To slay me in each quiet spot,
Where I have sanctified a home.
Thou'st taken from me wide domains,
And follow'd me with hate and scorn ;
Enjoy thine own—let me alone—
I wait in patience for the Morn."

A frenzy flush'd her burning brow,

A rage too mighty to contain ;
Her nostrils widen'd, and seem'd to smoke ;
She grasp'd her neck as she would choke,
And then, like one who suffer'd pain,
Her trembling lips she did compress ;
Her cheeks grew cold and colourless.
But soon the madness of her blood
Boil'd in her bosom where she stood ;
Her eyes seem'd coals of living flame,
And incoherent curses came,
Gasping and gurgling, from her mouth ;—
Never tornado of the south

Made half the wreck as, in that hour,
She would have made, had she the power.

My friend stood by, with folded arms,
Serene, and innocent, and pure ;
And when she saw that he but smiled
At all her hate, she could endure
No longer on his face to look,
But smote it with her jewell'd hand :
"Insensate wretch !" she fiercely said,
"Let me not slay thee where I stand ;
I will not stab thee to the heart,
Lest, in my haste, I mar delight,
And thou shouldst die and end thy pain
Too suddenly before my sight.
Not yet thy venomous blood shall flow,
But I *will* slay thee ere I go !"

Her body-guards, so fierce and grim,
Seized his arms and pinion'd him ;
And every one, with his gauntlet on,—
An iron gauntlet, heavy to bear,—
Smote him on his cheeks and eyes,
And bruised his lips, so ruddy fair,
Till the blood started, and over-dyed
The bloom of his face with gory red ;
And then they spat on him in spite,
And heap'd foul curses on his head.
And he—what could he do but pray,
And let them work their cruel will ?—
Turn'd his looks to the judging sky,
Appealing, though forgiving still.

Then from his lily skin they tore
Every vestment that he bore ;
Smote him, threw him on the ground,
And his limbs with fetters bound ;
Naked, helpless, and forlorn,
Mark for all their wrath and scorn ;
And with lying words, accused
Of every shame, deceit, and crime ;
And, when once he strove to speak,
Fill'd his mouth with sand and slime ;
Stamping on him as he lay
Bound and bleeding on the way ;
And I, alas ! alone, alone !
Could but curse them and bemoan
That I could not, as I trod,
Grasp th' avenging bolts of God.

And as he lay upon the beach,
Deprived of motion and of speech,
The queen, that woman so proud and fierce,
Look'd upon him with feverish joy ;
Her fiery glances seem'd to pierce
Through and through the bleeding boy ;
She put her hand on his naked breast,
And felt his heart : " Ah ! well," said she,
" It beats and beats, but shall not beat
To vex me thus incessantly."
And she drew the poniard from her side,
Slowly, calmly, sheath and all ;
Unsheathed it, felt if its edge were sharp,
And dipp'd its point in poisonous gall ;

And, kneeling down, with flashing face
Gazed upon him in that place.

She did *not* stab him : she grasp'd his flesh

As if she'd tear it from his bones ;

Then took the slime from his bleeding mouth,

That she might hear his piteous groans.

He faintly said, "Thou canst not kill ;

My charmed life defies thy will."

"I can," she answer'd, whispering low ;—

"This is the death that thou shalt know.

Thy days are number'd—thy race is run ;

Thou art an insult to the sun."

And in his breast, up to the hilt,

She plunged the dagger, and wrench'd it round,

Then drew it out with a joyous cry,

And pointed to the ghastly wound ;

Then drove it in again—again,

With force redoubled every time ;

And left it sticking in his heart

For very luxury of crime.

Sense and motion left his frame,

From his lips no breathing came :

"He's dead," quoth she ; "he's dead at last,

And all my agony is past.

Take him up ! let the Dead Sea wave

Float him about without a grave !

Take him up and throw him in !

In these waters none can sink ;—

'Mid the foul naphtha let him swim,

To gorge the vultures, limb by limb,
When they come to the water's brink !
And if they come not, let him lie,
Rotting betwixt the wave and sky !—
Take him by the heels and chin,
And spit on him, and cast him in !”

They twined their coarse hands in his hair ;
They took his body, so white and fair ;
They spat upon his patient face,
Pale, but fill'd with heavenly grace ;
They took him up, and in the sea,
They cast him ignominiously.
And the fearful woman, proud and strong,
The fiendish woman who did the wrong,
Bade clarion sound, and trumpet play,
And went exulting on her way.

A sudden wind—a treacherous wind—
Arose upon that Dead Sea shore ;
The heavy waves began to swell,
To chafe, and foam, and lash, and roar ;
A gloom o'erspread the clear blue sky :—
Once alone I could descry
His fair white limbs go floating by
On the crest of a distant wave ;
And I sat me down upon the sand,
Wailing that I, with strong right hand,
Had not snatch'd him from the grave,
And smitten the murd'ress to the dust
Ere she sacrificed the just.

All that day the storm blew high,
And all that day I linger'd there ;
There was no living thing but I
On the shore of that sad sea,
And I was moaning piteously.

Towards the night the wind blew fair,
And the silver rim of the bright new moon
Shone in a deep cerulean air,
And look'd at itself in the salt lagoon.
And there was silence, cold as death ;
Not a motion but my breath.

Long I sat upon the shore,
Brooding on that cruel wrong,
Wondering if for evermore
The evil thing should be the strong :
When I heard a sudden sound,
And saw a phosphorescent track
On the breast of the waves so dull and black.
I listen'd—I could plainly hear
The measured stroke, precise and clear,
Of a swimmer swimming near :—
I look'd—I saw the floating locks,
The face upturn'd, the bosom brave,
The calm full eyes, that look'd on me
Through the darkness of the sea ;
The strong limbs, battling with the wave :—
I saw the motion—I heard the breath,
I knew his victory over death.

It was my friend, my living friend ;
I clasp'd him, clad him, wept for joy.
"They may think," he said, "to strike me dead,
They can but wound me—not destroy.
The strongest bands, the fastest chain,
On my free limbs will not remain ;
For the deepest wounds that hate can strike,
I find a healing in the air ;
Even poison'd weapons cannot kill ;
They're powerless on the life I bear.
And she, whose hate pursues me still,
A queen superb, of lofty line,
Shall have her day, then fade away,
And all her empire shall be mine."



THE FOLLOWER.

I.

"WHY dost thou look so sad and wan?
And why art thou so woe-begone?
Why dost thou mutter words of fear?
Do I not love thee, father dear?
Is not earth a place of joy?
Tell me, father, tell thy boy."

II.

"There is a fiend doth follow me;
A fearful fiend thou canst not see,—
But I behold him. Day or night
He is not absent from my sight:
I know thou lovest me, O my child,—
But this demon drives me wild.

III.

"The world was once both good and fair,
There was a glory in the air,
When my heart was pure and young,
By guilt and misery unwrung;
But a demon such as this,
Makes an agony of bliss.

IV.

"He besets my daily path,
I am the victim of his wrath;
He smears his fingers o'er my meat,
And poisons everything I eat;
Puts fatal acid in my drink—
Oh, it is misery to think!

V.

"He lies beside me in my bed;
He places thorns beneath my head;
He sits upon my suffering breast,
And sends the dreams that mar my rest;
He tracks my steps where'er I stray,
And gibes and mocks me night and day.

VI.

"When sympathetic friends condole,
And whisper comfort to my soul,
This spiteful devil comes to and fro,
And turns each friend into a foe;
Perverts my comfort into pain,
Maddening my heart and brain.

VII.

"When I think I'm all alone,
I start to hear his mocking groan;
I see his fearful face and eyes,—
That hellish face which multiplies,

And fills the room from roof to floor
With scowling demons evermore,

VIII

"Cruel is he; his power is great;
He pursues me; he is fate.
If I look to heaven, and pray,
I see his dreadful shape mid-way;
And ev'n the placid stars assume
His sneering likeness in the gloom.

IX.

"He leads my steps to dark, deep pools,
And says, 'None live but wretched fools.'
He puts sharp weapons in my sight,
And shows me poison, ruby bright,
And whispers, if I like him not,
How soon my freedom may be got.

X.

"At times I think my heart will break;
But I resist him for thy sake:
His power departs when thou art near—
Of thy sweet face he stands in fear;
And if thou'lt love me, O my boy,
I'll grapple with him, and destroy."

XI.

"Father, I love thee: I will pray
For strength to drive this fiend away.

And if thou wilt be bold of heart,
I know the demon will depart ;
And I will walk with thee abroad,
And scare him with the name of God.

XII.

"I'll lie beside thee in the night,
He shall not come to plague thy sight.
Why should his face fill up the skies
With hideousness and mockeries?
There are fair faces up in heaven,
That always smile on the forgiven.

XIII.

"They beam upon us : they are strong :
This fiend shall not resist them long.
We'll see them in the stars and moon,
We'll see them in the sun at noon ;
We'll see them in the leaves and flowers,
And hear them singing 'mid the bowers.

XIV.

"He is but one : why should we fear,
When smiling angels fill the sphere ?
And one among them known to thee—
Chief angel of *my* memory—
My mother, dead, and gone before!"—
"Talk thus, my child, I'll fear no more.

XV.

"Thy heart is pure, thy speech is mild,
I gain instruction from a child :
The fiend that haunts me must depart,—
He cannot vex me where thou art—
Thy mother's memory ! God ! and thee !
The fiend has fled—my soul is free !"



WE ARE WISER THAN WE KNOW.

THOU, who in the midnight silence
Lookest to the orbs on high,
Feeling humbled, yet elated,
In the presence of the sky ;
Thou, who minglest with thy sadness
Pride ecstatic, awe divine,
That even *thou* canst trace their progress
And the law by which they shine,—
Intuition shall uphold thee,
Ev'n though Reason drag thee low ;
Lean on faith, look up rejoicing—
We are wiser than we know.

Thou, who hearest plaintive music,
Or sweet songs of other days ;
Heaven-revealing organs pealing,
Or clear voices hymning praise,
And wouldst weep, thou know'st not wherefore,
Though thy soul is steep'd in joy,
And the world looks kindly on thee,
And thy bliss hath no alloy,—
Weep, nor seek for consolation,
Let the heaven-sent droplets flow,
They are hints of mighty secrets—
We are wiser than we know !

Thou, who in the noon-time brightness
Seest a shadow undefined;
Hear'st a voice that indistinctly
Whispers caution to thy mind:
Thou, who hast a vague foreboding
That a peril may be near,
Even when Nature smiles around thee,
And thy Conscience holds thee clear,
Trust the warning—look before thee—
Angels may the mirror show,
Dimly still, but sent to guide thee—
We are wiser than we know.

Countless chords of heavenly music,
Struck ere earthly time began,
Vibrate in immortal concord
Through the answering soul of man :
Countless rays of heavenly glory
Shine through spirit pent in clay,
On the wise men at their labours,
On the children at their play.
Man has gazed on heavenly secrets,
Sunn'd himself in heavenly glow,
Seen the glory; heard the music;—
We are wiser than we know.



THE CHILD AND THE MOURNERS.

A LITTLE child, beneath a tree,
Sat and chanted cheerily
A little song, a pleasant song,
Which was—she sang it all day long—
“When the wind blows, the blossoms fall,
But a good God reigns over all!”

There pass'd a lady by the way,
Moaning in the face of day:
There were tears upon her cheek,
Grief in her heart too great to speak;
Her husband died but yester-morn,
And left her in the world forlorn.

She stopp'd and listen'd to the child,
That look'd to Heaven, and, singing, smiled;
And saw not, for her own despair,
Another lady, young and fair,
Who, also passing, stopp'd to hear
The infant's anthem ringing clear.

For she, but few sad days before,
Had lost the little babe she bore;

And grief was heavy at her soul,
As that sweet memory o'er her stole,
And show'd how bright had been the Past,
The Present drear and overcast.

And as they stood beneath the tree,
Listening, soothed, and placidly,
A youth came by, whose sunken eyes
Spake of a load of miseries ;
And he, arrested like the twain,
Stopp'd to listen to the strain.

Death had bow'd the youthful head
Of his bride beloved, his bride unwed :
Her marriage robes were fitted on,
Her fair young face with blushes shone,
When the destroyer smote her low,
And left the lover to his woe.

And these three listen'd to the song,
Silver-toned, and sweet, and strong,
Which that child, the live-long day,
Chanted to itself in play :
"When the wind blows, the blossoms fall,
But a good God reigns over all."

The widow's lips impulsive moved ;
The mother's grief, though unreprieved,
Softened, as her trembling tongue
Repeated what the infant sung ;
And the sad lover, with a start,
Conn'd it over to his heart.

And though the child—if child it were,
And not a seraph, sitting there—
Was seen no more, the sorrowing three
Went on their way resignedly,
The song still ringing in their ears—
Was it music of the spheres?

Who shall tell? They did not know.
But in the midst of deepest woe
The strain recurr'd when sorrow grew,
To warn them, and console them too:
“When the wind blows, the blossoms fall,
But a good God reigns over all.”



THE WATER TARANTELLA.

"The condition of those who were afflicted with Tarantism was in many cases united with so great a sensibility to music, that at the very first tone of their favourite melodies they sprang up shouting for joy, and danced on without intermission, until they sank on the ground exhausted, and almost lifeless. Some loved to hear the sound of water, and delighted in hearing of gushing springs, and rushing cascades and streams."—*Hecker's Epidemics of the Middle Ages. The Dancing Mania.*

THE wind blows low on the fields and hedges,
There is a murmur amid the sedges,
A low sweet sound where the water gushes
Forth from the grass amid the rushes;
It is a streamlet small and young,
It loves to dally the mosses among,
It trickles slowly,
It whispers lowly,
On its breast the thistle drops its down,
The water-lily
So white and stilly
Sleeps in its lap till its leaves grow brown

*Dance, poor Eveleen, dance and dream,—
Soft is the music, and fresh the stream.*

1

We will follow thee where it flows—
It leaves the sedges dank behind,
And on its fringe a willow shows
Its silvery leaflets to the wind;
And a brook comes down from far away,
And babbles into it all the day;
And both together creep through meads
Where the shy plover hides and feeds,
And then away through fields of corn,
Or stretch of meadows newly shorn:
Noiselessly they flow and clear
By open wold and cover'd brake;
But if you listen, you may hear
The steady music which they make.

*Dance, poor Eveleen, dance,—we follow,
O'er field, and copse, and wild-wood hollow.*

And now the stream begins to run
Over the pebbles in its bed,
To rumple its breast and glance in the sun,
And curl to the light breeze overhead.
No longer loitering, lingering, calm,
It hurries away o'er the chafing shingle,
Humming a song, singing a psalm,
Through the orchard, down the dingle.
Pools like mirrors adorn its breast,
And there the trout and the minnow rest;
The ringdove sings in her nest alone
The tender song that love has taught her;
And the redbreast sits on the boulder-stone,
Washing his plumes in the wimpling water.

*Brisker now let the music sound;
Dance, Eveleen, dance,—we follow thee ever,
And tread the ground with a quick rebound,
Away, away with the rolling river!*

Fed by its tributary rills
From distant valleys with circling hills,
And travelling seaward, merrily brawling,
Wild, impassion'd, rapid, and strong,
With voice of power to the green woods calling,
The impetuous river dashes along,
And is sweeping, leaping, through the meadows
Almost as fast as the driving shadows
Of clouds that fly before the wind,
Down to the chasmy precipices,
There to burst in foaming fall:—
It bursts, it thunders, it roars, it hisses,
An iris is its coronal;
And the pendulous trees above it shiver,
Bathed by the rain of that rampant river.

*So dance, fair Eveleen, faster, faster;
Unloose thy zone, thy locks untwine;—
Thy bosom, no more like the alabaster,
Is flush'd, and heated, and red like wine;
Thy pulse is beating, thy blood is heating
Thy lips are open, thine eyeballs shine.*

And now the river spends its wrath,
The music sinks, the winds blow low;
Its bosom broad is a nation's path—
Smooth and pleasant is its flow.

A boat shoots by with its rowers trim,
A ferryman plies his lazy oar;
And miles adown, in the distance dim,
There stands a city on the shore.

*By corn-fields yellow, by meadows green,
And stately gardens, we advance;
Still we follow thee, Eveleen—
Gentle, gentler, be thy dance.*

Behold, upon a grassy lawn,
Sloped smoothly downwards to the brink,
With large soft eyes, a dapple fawn
Stoops to the lucid wave to drink;
And, lo! an avenue of oak,
Whose wrinkled stems, of giant girth,
Have stood unarm'd the winter's stroke
For thrice a century, firm in earth,
Their boughs o'ertopp'd by the turrets hoary
Of a mansion old and famed in story.

*They pass, all pass,
As in magic glass,
And still we trace the placid stream—
Castle and tower,
And park and bower;
Dance, poor Eveleen, dance and dream.*

A hundred ships are in the river,
Their tall masts point to a clear blue sky,
Their sails are furl'd, their pennants curl'd,

To the sweet west wind that wantons by;
And every flag, emblazon'd fair,
Flaps at its will on the sunny air.
There is a peal of Sabbath bells,
Over the river's breast it swells;
The tall proud steeples look calmly down
On the quiet houses of the town;
'Tis a day of love, of rest, of peace—
Eveleen, the song must cease.

*Gently, Eveleen, gently rest,
Softly on thy pillow sleep;
The fit is o'er, thy heaving breast
Will calm itself in slumber deep;
Thou'st danced, poor maid, the tarantelle,
Thou'st danced it long and danced it well;
Thou'st trod the maze, and traced the shore;
Thou shalt be heal'd for evermore.*



THE EARTH AND THE STARS.

SAID the Earth to the Stars—"Oh my sisters,
Fellow-travellers through this dread immensity,
Send a voice to my spirit and declare,
If, serenely as ye smile on me, and fair,
Ye are dwellings for all miseries, like me?

"Oh tell me if in you, my glorious sisters,
Rules a tyrant like the one enthronèd here?
If Death has ever enter'd in your climes,
And Suffering, and Calamity, and Crimes
Ever rob you of the children that you rear?

"Oh tell me if in you, my myriad sisters,
The weak are ever trampled by the strong?
If Malice, and Intolerance, and Hate,
And Warfare, and Ambition to be great,
Ever cause the Right to suffer from the Wrong?

"Oh tell me, silent sisters, are ye happy?
Are the multitudes that live beneath your skies,
Full of knowledge, unaccursed by such a ban
As man has ever issued against man?
Are they happy, are they loving, are they wise?"

Said the Stars to the Earth—"Oh mournful sister,
Rolling calmly through the calm infinity,
We have roll'd for countless ages on our track,
Ever onward—pressing onward—never back;—
There is progress both for us and for thee.

"Thou wilt make, oh thou foolish little sister,
The full cycle of thy glory in thy time;
We are rolling on in ours for evermore;—
Look not backward—see Eternity before,
And free thyself of Sorrow and of Crime.

"God, who made thee, never meant thee, mournful
sister,
To be fill'd with sin and grief eternally;
And the children that are born upon thy breast
Shall, in fulness of their destiny, be blest:—
There is Progress for the Stars and for Thee."



THE YOUNG EARTH.

"The earth gives signs of age, disease, and fickleness. It yields its increase grudgingly, and demands an exorbitant fee beforehand, in toil and sweat from the husbandman. It has ill turns or paroxysms, when it rouses the ocean into a tempest, and makes sport of navies, strewing the shore with the wrecks and carcases of men. It rocks a continent or sinks an island ; shaking massive cities into countless fragments, and burying its wretched inhabitants in indiscriminate ruin ; anon it writhes and groans in mortal agony, and finds relief only by disgorging its fiery bowels, burying cities and villages in burning graves. THE EARTH IS OLD AND FEEBLE, and must needs groan on until it renews its prime."—*Miseries and Liabilities of the present Life.*

OLD Earth ? YOUNG EARTH !—though myriad years,
Since Time's primeval morn,
She may have bloom'd amid the spheres
Before a man was born !

Still young ; though race succeeding race
Have trod her breast sublime,
And flourish'd in their pride of place
Their full allotted time,—

Then pass'd away, like daily things,
Nor left a trace behind
To tell how many thousand Springs
They lived before mankind.

We, who for threescore years and ten
Toil deathwards from our birth,
Deem sixty centuries of men
A ripe old age for Earth.

But all our deeds, though back we look
With yearning keen and fond,
Fill but a page : the mighty book
Lies infinite beyond.

She is not old, or waxing cold,
But vigorous as of yore,
When 'mid her kindred globes she roll'd,
Exulting evermore.

Six thousand years of human strife
Are little in the sum ;
A morning added to her life,
And noonday yet to come.

Six thousand years! what have *they* brought,
O, poor ephemeral man ?
Go, reckon centuries by thought,
Thou'lt find them but a span.

Go reckon time by progress made,
And lo! what ages pass,
Swift as the transitory shade
Of clouds upon the grass.

Six thousand years! and what are they?
A cycle scarce begun;
The fragment of a grander day
Unmeasured by the sun;

Too short to purify the sight
Of souls in Error blind;
Too short to show the healing light
Of Love to all mankind.

For lo! the lesson has been read
In every clime and tongue;
The Sea has breathed it from her bed,
And Earth and Air have sung;

The Sun has beam'd it from above
To all his worlds around;
The stars have preach'd that God is Love:
But answer never found.

The generations cold and dark
Have lived and pass'd away,
And never caught the faintest spark
Of Love's eternal ray.

The myriads, seeking to create
An idol to adore,
Have made their God a God of Hate,
And worshipp'd him with gore.

And living multitudes have heard
That Love is Nature's plan,
Yet shut their souls against the Word
That teaches love to man.

But there is progress in the spheres,
The glorious Earth is young ;
The seed has lain six thousand years,
The tender shoots have sprung.

She is not old but young and fair ;
And marching to her prime,
Her teeming bosom yet shall bear
The harvest of her time.

And generations thought-endued—
Each wiser than the last,
Shall crowd, in one short year the good
Of centuries of the past ;—

Shall, living, aid by loving deeds
The truths for which we pine,
And, dying, sow the fruitful seeds
Of impulse more divine.

The struggle, long and sorely fought,
Embitter'd as it spread,
For simplest rights—free hand, free thought,
And sustenance of bread :

The struggle of the righteous weak
Against the unrighteous strong ;
Of Justice firm, though mild and meek,
Against oppressive Wrong—

Draws in, and must be ended yet ;—
It ripens to its hour :
The mighty combatants have met ;
And Truth has challenged Power.

Young Earth !—her sad six thousand years,
Now passing swift away,
Are but her infancy of tears—
The dawn before the day.



THE GOLDEN MADNESS.

By the road-side there sat an aged man,
 Who all day long, from dawn into the night,
 Counted with weary fingers heaps of stones.
 His red eyes dropp'd with rheum, his yellow hands
 Trembled with palsy, his pale sunken cheeks
 Were mark'd with deep and venerable seams,
 His flat bald brow was ever bent to earth,
 His few grey hairs waved to the passing winds,
 His straggling teeth, blacken'd and carious,
 Rattled and tumbled from his bloodless gums;—
 I spake him kindly, saying, "Why this toil
 At task like this, cracking thy rotten bones,
 To gain nor health, nor recompense, nor thanks?"

He made no answer, but went counting on,
 Mumbling and muttering slowly to himself,
 Chinking the stones with melancholy sound.
 Piece after piece; looking nor right nor left,
 Nor upwards, but aye down upon the heap.

I asked again, "What is it that thou dost,
 Wasting the remnant of thy days in toil,
 Without fruition to thyself or kind,
 As earnestly as if these stones were gold,
 And all thine own to spend and to enjoy?"

He look'd upon me with a vacant eye,
And stopp'd not in his task. "Gold! didst thou say?
They *are* gold—precious, ready-coin'd and pure,
And all mine own to spend and to enjoy,
When I have counted them. So, get thee gone,
Unless thou art a borrower or a thief."
And aye he chink'd the flints and chips of slate,
One after one, muttering their numbers o'er,
At every hundred stopping for a while
To rub his wither'd palms, and eye the heap
With idiot happiness, ere he resumed.

There came a stranger by the way. I ask'd
If he knew aught of this forlorn old man.
"Right well," he said; "the creature is insane,
And hath been ever since he had a beard.
He first went mad for greediness of gold."

"Know you his story?" "Perfectly," said he.
"Look how he counts his miserable flints
And bits of slate. Twelve mortal hours each day
He sits at work, summer and winter both;
'Mid storm or sunshine, heat or nipping frost,
He counts and counts; and since his limbs were
young,
Till now that he is crook'd and stiffen'd old,
He hath not miss'd a day. The silly wretch
Believes each stone a lump of shining gold,
And that he made a bargain with the fiend,
That if he'd count one thousand million coins
Of minted gold, audibly, one by one,
The gold should be his own the very hour

When he had told the thousand millionth piece ;
Provided always, as such bargains go,
The fiend should have his soul in recompense.

“Unskilled in figures, but brimful of greed,
He chuckled at his bargain, and began ;
And for a year reckon'd with hopeful heart.
At last a glimpse of light broke on his sense,
And show'd the fool that millions—quickly said—
Were not so quickly counted as he thought.
But still he plies his melancholy task,
Dreaming of boundless wealth and curbless power,
And slavish worship from his fellow-men.”

“If he could reckon fifty thousand stones
Daily, and miss no day in all the year,
’Twould take him five-and-fifty years of life
To reach the awful millions he desires.
He has been fifty of these years or more
Feeding his coward soul with this conceit,
Exposed to every blast, starved, wretched, old,
Toothless, and clothed with rags and squalidness,
He eyes his fancied treasure with delight,
And thinks to cheat the devil at the last.

“Look at his drivelling lips, his bloodshot eyes,
His trembling hands, his loose and yellow skin,
His flimsy rottenness, and own with me
That this man’s madness, though a piteous thing,
Deserves no pity, for the avarice
So mean and filthy that was cause of it.”

* * * * *

I gazed once more upon his wrinkled face,
Vacant with idiotcy, and went my way
Fill'd with disgust and sorrow, for I deem'd
That his great lunacy was but a type
Of many a smaller madness as abject,
That daily takes possession of men's hearts
And blinds them to the uses of their life.

Poor fool! he gathers stones—they gather gold,
With toil and moil, thick sweat and grovelling
thought.
He has his flints, and they acquire their coin.
And who's the wiser? Neither he nor they.



THE OUT-COMER AND THE IN-GOER.

FOR Ernest was a palace built,
 A palace beautiful to see ;
 Marble-porch'd and cedar-chamber'd,
 Hung with damask drapery ;
 Boss'd with ornaments of silver,
 Interlaid with gems and gold ;
 Fill'd with carvings, from cathedrals
 Rescued in the days of old ;
 Eloquent with books and pictures,
 All that luxury could afford ;
 Warm with statues that Pygmalion
 Might have fashion'd and adored.
 In his forest glades and vistas
 Lovely were the light and gloom ;
 Fountains sparkled in his gardens,
 And exotics breathed perfume.

With him to that lordly palace
 Went the friend who loved him best,
 In good fortune unexalted,
 In misfortune undepress'd.
 Little reck'd that friend of grandeur ;
 Dearer far to him than all
 Wealth could offer, were the rosebuds
 Growing on the garden wall.

Dearer far were simple pleasures,
And the charms by Nature spread,
Than all gauds of power and splendour
Heap'd upon their favourite's head.
Plain was he in speech and raiment,
Humble-minded, and imbued
With a daily love of virtue,
And a daily gratitude.

Ere these palace-halls received them,
Steadfast was the faith they bore ;
No estrangement came between them,
Darkening their study-door.
Ernest in his friend's communion
Loved himself and all his kind,
Cherishing a loving nature,
Tutor'd by a happy mind ;
Rich and poor were equal brothers
In that heart, too pure to hold
Pride of lineage or station,
Or the vanity of gold.
Never chanced it, in that season,
That he form'd a thought unjust
Of the meanest fellow-mortal,
Fashion'd of a common dust.

But his palace somewhat changed him ;
Rosebuds gather'd—early walks
Sunset roamings—nightly musings—
Mystic philosophic talks—


Nothing as of old engross'd him ;
And the promptings of his friend
Fell upon his sated spirit,
Not to guide him, but offend.
Daily grew the chilling coolness,
Till, ere many months had flown,
Ernest shut his door upon him,
And resolved to live alone :
And retreating 'mid his splendour,
Rooted out all love he bore
For that friend, so true, so noble,
Banish'd, lost for evermore.

Scarcely had his friend departed,
Pain'd and pensive, but resign'd,
When another sought the palace
More accordant to his mind.
He in Ernest's lordly chambers
Sat, and call'd him first of men ;
Praised his pictures and his statues,
Flatter'd him with tongue and pen ;
Press'd the milk of human kindness
From his bosom cold and sere,
Taught him to be harsh and cruel,
Proud, disdainful, and austere ;
Fill'd him up with vain inflation,
And contempt for meaner clay,
As if *he* were born to govern,
It to flatter and obey.

Sometimes on his lonely pillow,
When his conscience show'd the truth,

He deplored his blind estrangement
From the comrade of his youth ;
But the daylight chill'd the current
Of that feeling, and it froze
Hard enough to bear the burden
Of such memories as those.
And all day, in gloomy grandeur,
In his corridors and halls,
Looking at his old escutcheons,
And the portraits on the walls,
He and his companion wander'd,
Calm of eye, with lips upcurl'd,
Aliens to the worth and goodness,
And the beauty of the world.

Wintry winds of human anguish,
Blowing round them day and night,
Never moved them—never clouded
Their serenity of light.
They were made of choice material,
Tempest-proof, from lightning free,
And the world, its joys and sorrows,
Was to them a shipless sea,
Dark, unfathomable, trackless,
Far beyond their care or ken,
Save at times, when ostentation
Brought them to the gaze of men.
But ev'n this was painful to them—
Man was cold, and earth was wide ;
They preferr'd the warm seclusion
Of their apathy and pride.



Who was he, the first out-goer ?
He was Human Sympathy ;
And the in-comer, that displaced him ?
He was Worldly Vanity.
With the first Religion vanish'd,
Charity, and Faith in Man,
And the genial Love of Nature,
Boundless as Creation's plan.
With the second enter'd Hatred
Harsh Intolerance, and Scorn.
Ernest, in his life's cold evening
Saw the error of his morn—
Saw his error and deplored it,
And upon his death-bed lain,
Pray'd for mercy, while confessing,
Dying, he had lived in vain.



THE DROP OF AMBROSIA.

"WHITHER away? whither away,
With thine eyes through the distance looking so
keen?

The road is narrow, and is not long,
And if thou wouldst but awhile delay,
I would show thee sights thou hast not seen ;
And thou shouldst hear a voice of song,
And thou shouldst learn of things unknown,
And live a double and fuller life.
Whither away? I prithee stay,—
There are angels near; thou'rt not alone—
The very air is with beauty rife.
The night is lovely, fair is the day,
Why this hurry to travel away,
To close thy journey, to shut thy book?
Why at the end wilt thou ever look?
Why on the tide wilt thou ever think,
And neglect the flow'rets on the brink?"

He said, in answer to my cries,
"Let me alone, nor vex my soul;
I've set my mind on a glittering prize
That I see midway towards the goal.
It shines, 'mid cloud on the mountain-top,
A bright, divine, ambrosial drop.

Sad, till I grasp it, the time appears ;
Into hours the weeks I'd pack,
Compress the lingering, drawling years
To months, and never wish them back.
Why should I stay? What boots delay?
What do I care for an angel's song?
For the stars of night, or the flowers of day,
When lingering would the hours prolong?
Let me alone : my mind and heart
Are full of a joy thou canst not see,
And each impediment is pain ;
Thy very talk is grief to me.
Let me away. Why should I stay,
Wasting time by answering thee?"

"Already," said I, "thy prime is past,
Thy flush of youth, thy warmth of noon ;
And many delights which the sunshine cast
Must wither away beneath the moon.
The path thou goest is short at best ;
And between thine eyes and the bliss they crave,
To trip thy feet in their course so fleet,
May there not be an open grave?
Why wilt thou hurry towards the end?
There are pleasant fields on the highway-side,
Bowers whence the hymns of Love ascend,
And rivers rolling a joyous tide,
In which to lave the weary limbs
Is bliss beyond the ambrosial drop
Which, far away, 'mid storm and dark,
Thou seest upon the mountain-top.

Straight is the path to the yawning tomb ;
But we may linger on the road,
And turn to the left, and turn to the right,
To enjoy the kindly gifts of God.
I would not live *my* life so soon ;
I would not spend it on *one* desire ;
Nor in such fearful haste as thine
Exhaust the fuel of its fire."

Vain was my speech : he closed his ears—
Straight on he rush'd, nor look'd behind.
He saw afar his glittering star,
The prize for which his spirit pined.
On every side were stars as fair—
Fairer I thought ; and drops of joy,
Divinest given to mortal man,
To cheer of his life the little span,
And sanctify its right employ.
He saw them not, but ran his race
With a speed that passion alone could give ;
Grew hard and grey on his narrow way,
And spent his life ere he learn'd to live.
And I saw before he reach'd his prize,
That he sunk in the grave before my eyes.



NOW.

THE venerable Past is past ;
 'Tis dark, and shines not in the ray :
 'Twas good, no doubt—'tis gone at last—
 There dawns another day.
 Why should we sit where ivies creep,
 And shroud ourselves in charnels deep ;
 Or the world's Yesterdays deplore,
 'Mid crumbling ruins, mossy hoar ?
 Why should we see with dead men's eyes,
 Looking at Was from morn to night,
 When the beauteous Now, the divine To Be,
 Woo with their charms our living sight ?
 Why should we hear but echoes dull,
 When the world of sound, so beautiful,
 Will give us music of our own ?
 Why in the darkness will we grope,
 When the sun, in heaven's resplendent cope
 Shines as bright as ever it shone ?

Abraham saw no brighter stars
 Than those which burn for thee and me.
 When Homer heard the lark's sweet song,
 Or night-bird's lovelier melody,
 They were such sounds as Shakspeare heard,
 Or Chaucer, when he bless'd the bird ;

Such lovely sounds as we can hear ;—
Great Plato saw the vernal year
Send forth its tender flowers and shoots,
And luscious autumn pour its fruits ;
And we can see the lilies blow,
The corn-fields wave, the rivers flow :
For us all bounties of the earth,
For us its wisdom, love, and mirth,
If we daily walk in the sight of God,
And prize the gifts He has bestow'd.

We will not dwell amid the graves,
Nor in dim twilights sit alone,
To gaze at moulder'd architraves,
Or plinths and columns overthrown ;
We will not only see the light
Through painted windows, cobwebb'd o'er,
Nor know the beauty of the night,
Save by the moonbeam on the floor :
But in the presence of the sun,
Or moon, or stars, our hearts shall glow ;
We'll look at nature face to face,
And we shall LOVE because we KNOW,
The present needs us. Every age
Bequeaths the next, for heritage,
No lazy luxury or delight,
But strenuous labour for the right ;
For Now, the child and sire of Time,
Demands the deeds of earnest men,
To make it better than the Past,
And stretch the circle of its ken.

Now is a fact that men deplore,
Though it might bless them evermore,
Would they but fashion it aright :
'Tis ever new, 'tis ever bright.

Time nor Eternity hath seen
A repetition of delight

In all its phases : ne'er hath been
For men or angels that which *is* ;

And that which *is*, hath ceased to be
Ere we have breathed it, and its place
Is lost in the Eternity.

But Now is ever good and fair,
Of the Infinitude the heir,
And we of it. So let us live,
That from the Past we may receive
Light for the Now ; from Now a joy
That Fate nor Time shall e'er destroy.



THE VISION OF MOCKERY.

ALL happy things are earnest. Once I roam'd
In England, or in Dream-land, through the streets
Of a huge, buzzing, dense metropolis
Slowly, in teeming thoroughfares, I walk'd,
One of the people, hearing with their ears,
Beholding with their eyes, and in their thought
Divining, till my soul was fill'd with grief
At all that I beheld, and felt, and knew.

It was a gibing, laughing, sneering crowd,
Devoid of truth, faith, love, and earnestness,
Except a horrid earnestness for gain ;
Fierce love of lucre, which if one had not,
He was despised and trodden down of men :
Which if one had, he was adored of all,
Placed on a pinnacle to be admired,
Flatter'd, and fill'd with other rich men's gifts ;
His overflowing fulness made more full,
His vulgarness thought choice gentility,
His vices virtues, and his prejudice
Wisdom innate, his coarse words oracles,
And he a chief and model of mankind.

But for all else than wealth these swarming crowds
Had slight regard ; and when their daily toil

In search of it was done, and time hung loose,
They gather'd in their clubs and theatres,
In market-place, or corner of the streets,
And mock'd and gibed—and held the best buffoon
The wisest man, so he but made them laugh.
Nothing was holy to these wretched crowds,
But all things food for jest and ribald wit,
Caricature, lampoon, and mockery.

I said to one, "Is this the end of life?
Is there no reverence for God or man?"
He turn'd and look'd, and, with a well-bred stare,
Eyed me askance: "What would you have?" quoth
he;

"We keep our reverence for sabbath-days,
And look demure the seventh part of our time;
If for six days we toil, six nights we laugh,
And who shall blame us? What new bore art thou,
From lands hyperborean, that canst think
Laughter a crime?"—"Nay," I replied, "not so;
Laughter is virtuous, if there be a cause:
But mockery!"—Thereat he smiled again,
Arching his eyebrows, that his eyes, full-stretch'd,
Might take the measure of my littleness,
And disappear'd amid the gathering throng.

I spake no more, but wander'd wearily on,
Until I reach'd a wide and crowded mart,
Where one, a mild and venerable man,
Address'd the multitude with slow, clear voice.
Few gave him audience, but he heeded not,
And spoke his thought, unmindful of the jeers

Of would-be wits and shallow mountebanks,
Scoffers and punsters, and obese dull clowns.

"Vain and unhappy multitudes," he said,
"That gibe and sneer at every holy thing;—
Is this your law of life? Is this the end?
To! ye have souls immortal and sublime,
To be made infinite in love and light,
And heavenly knowledge, if ye will but ope
The inner fountains and the inner eyes,
And see the deep and full significance,
The worth and wherefore of the life of man.

"Is it not sad, O myriad, myriad souls,
Infinite and immortal as ye are,
That ye will make your own infinity
A retrogression? Immortality,
Change of vile vesture for a viler still?
That ye will circle with the feculent clay
Your life-light heavenly clear, until it burn
No fairer, to the outward world, than foul,
Thick exhalations of a stagnant fen?
Is it not sad, that germs which should expand
Even here, to trees of bole magnificent,
Should rot and perish in unsavoury mire;
Or, ere they rot, be eaten up by swine,—
Swine of ill passion, selfishness, and lust?
Is it not sad—a thing for bitter tears—
Unless for hope, and efforts made more strong
By seeming hopelessness—that men should live
And never know the meaning of their life?
That they should die, and never know that death

THE VISION OF MOCKERY.

Is change, not ceasing? and that life and death
Are ebb and flow of an eternal tide,
In which the ripple may become a wave,
The wave a sea, the sea a universe?

“Alas! poor crowds, self-querch’d, self-sacrificed,
Why will ye crawl, when ye might walk erect?
Why will ye grovel, when ye might aspire?
Why will ye don foul rags, when ye might wear
Angelic vestments? Why co-herd with beasts,
And graze in fields, or wallow in the mire,
When ye might feed on manna dropp’d from heaven?”

Thereat a listener in the crowd exclaimed—
One with a portly paunch, and large round face,
And little twinkling eyes,—“You waste your words:
Why do you preach to us of things like these,
Things transcendental and absurdly wise?
The earth is man’s; man is the earth’s. Forget
These idle dreams, and eat, and drink, and laugh,
And speculate, and hoard a heap of gold;
And so be one of us, that as you live,
You may enjoy; and when you die, die well,
Leaving plump money-bags to bless your sons.”
And all the people laugh’d, and cried, “Hear! hear!”
With loud applause, and shouts vociferous.
But still the orator undaunted stood,
Though laughter sputter’d round him; and vain scoffs,
Like muddy showerlets, fell on every side;
And more he would have said, but that a cry
Of one in haste, and in great stress of speech,
Made interruption: “Lo! the children die!—

The little children, and you heed them not !
The children die : they perish, body and soul,
In pestilent lanes, and rotting alleys vile ;
Thousands on thousands, more than eyes can count.
God's sun shines on them, but they never heard
His name who made it : the fair world they tread
Is foul to them, that never saw the fields,
The green trees, the great mountains, the bright
streams,

Or knew that God, who fashion'd all things, loves
All he has made, and children most of all,
The purest from his hand. Why should they die ?
For life in ignorance is very death.
Some of them toil, and waste their tender limbs
In mills; or mines, from morn till past the night :
Machines of flesh, too sorely overwrought
To reach maturity ere they grow old.
Some of them toil not, but by night and day
Prowl in the fetid ways, and lie, and steal,
And curse, and never know that words can bless,
Or that such thing as blessing in this world
Was ever heard of :—Save, oh ! save them all !
If not for their sakes, for our own ! Not one
Of all these myriads, were we truly wise,
Should perish thus. For, though they live in shame,
And fill the world with crimes and miseries,
Great is their sorrow, but the guilt is ours."

He ceased, and through the crowd a murmur ran,
As though his words had moved them to remorse,
Or pity, but it died away ; and one
Speaking for many, as if he alone

Were mouth-piece and interpreter of men,
Exclaim'd in pompous wise, "Why should we heed?
Why interfere? It is a perilous thing
To step between a parent and his child.
Each for himself; each father for his own;
No good can come of such philosophy.
It weighs all things in theoretic scales,
And meddles but to mar. The world is good;
Let it alone; 'twill educate itself."

He ceased, and look'd about him with a smile,
That said, as plainly as a smile can say,
How smart he was, how practically wise.
Whereat another, taking up the chant,
Said, "Bah! it irks my patience evermore,
To hear such vulgar flattery of the crowd;
Were they not born to drudge, to groan, to sweat?
Is't not so written in the Book? If so,
Why give them knowledge they can never use?
A little of it is a poisonous thing,
And much is utterly beyond their reach;—
So, prithee, Master Quack, let well alone.
If thou canst sing for our amusement, sing;
Or dance, then dance; or jest, then jest away;
Stand on thy head, cut capers in the air,
Or anything thou wilt but preach of this."

Thereat the crowd laugh'd as with one accord;
And when the earnest man again essay'd
To speak his truth, they raised derisive shouts
That stifled all his words upon his lips,
And fill'd his heart and mine with pity and grief.

What more was said I know not, nor how long
I stood amongst them ; but a sudden cry,
And rushing of the people to one place,
Aroused me from my lethargy, and, lo !
I heard a voice potential with the crowd,
Coarse and stentorian, breaking on my ear.
"Behold," it said, "behold the game of games,
The chance of chances—better than all trade,
Commerce, or industry pursued by man.
Who plays it well, grows wealthy in a day ;
Who plays it ill may gain more great reward
Than Labour, with his utmost pith and stress,
Could sweat for in a life." And as he spake,
Loose scraps of paper flutter'd in his hands.
There seem'd deep fascination in the sight,
For every eye beseech'd, and every tongue
Implored him for them. From his vulgar clutch
They dropp'd like flakes of snow innumerable.
And then the scramble and the crush began ;
Old men and young, the famish'd and the full,
The rich and poor, widow, and wife, and maid,
Master and servant, all with one intent,
Rush'd on the paper ; from their eager eyes
Flashing a fierce unconquerable greed,
Their hot palms itching, all their being fill'd
With one desire ; so that amid the press,
If some were crush'd and smitten to the ground,
They heeded not, but trod on fallen heads
As unconcernedly as racing steeds
Trample the sward. And still the paper flakes
Fell fast around ; and still the crowd rush'd on,
Roaring and wild, its myriad hands held up

To grasp the glittering prizes ere they fell.
Then came a pause. A fearful mockery
Began to spread. Each call'd his fellow—fool !
And every fool acknowledged—so he was,
But thought his neighbour greater fool than he.
And there was laughter loud, and stifled groans,
And shouts obstreperous, till, all at once,
They dropp'd the scraps of paper from their hands,
As if a leprosy were in the touch ;
And in their haste, o'er-eager to depart
From that gross presence, trod each other down.
As in a burning theatre, a crowd
Rushing by hundreds to one narrow door,
Meet certain death to flee uncertain fire,
So they in panic at the lust of gain,
That each man saw in others, not in self,
Fled in confusion, breathless and distraught,
Nor cared who died, if they themselves escaped.

I stood amazed, and blush'd for human-kind,
When on my ears a strain of music broke,
Melting in soft harmonious cadences.
I look'd, and, on a platform raised on high,
Beheld a lady beauteous as the dawn,
Dancing in robes of white and azure gauze ;
Her breast was bare ; her limbs, nor bare nor hid,
But full defined through her transparent robes,
Fill'd the beholders with voluptuous thoughts.
She seem'd to float upon the buoyant air,
To be a creature of an element
More spiritual than earth ; and when she smiled
There was such witchery in her painted cheeks,

That all the crowd, entranced with great delight,
And quite forgetful of their past distress,
Shouted with loud acclaim, and clapp'd their hands.
And when she twirl'd upon her pliant toe,
One fair limb vertical, the other raised
To horizontal straightness, such a burst
Of irrepressible, overpowering joy,
Fill'd all the air, it seem'd as men were mad,
And dancing were supremest bliss of earth ;—
The fairest dancer, first of woman-kind.
Then, as she curtsied with a winning look
To her idolaters, a shower of wreaths,
Garlands, and evergreens, and laurel crowns,
Fell all around her, and another burst
Of universal gladness rang around ;
And she, descending from her platform, slid
Graceful into her chariot, and the crowd
Fill'd with new frenzy at her loveliness,
Unyoked her prancing jennets, dapple-grey,
And drew her forth triumphant to her home.

Still more amazed, I left this fearful crowd,
And wander'd out amid the quiet woods
To hold communion with my secret soul,
And note, in Memory's many-storied book,
What I had seen and heard—that pondering well
Its true significance, I might extract
Good from the ill, and from the darkness light.

THE KING AND THE NIGHTINGALES.

A LEGEND OF HAVERING.

[Havering-atte-Bower, in Essex, was the favourite retirement of King Edward the Confessor, who so delighted in its solitary woods, that he shut himself up in them for weeks at a time. Old legends say that he met with but one annoyance in that pleasant seclusion—the continual warbling of the nightingales, pouring such floods of music upon his ear during his midnight meditations, as to disturb his devotions. He therefore prayed that never more within the bounds of that forest might nightingale's song be heard. His prayer, adds the legend, was granted. The following versification of the story shows a different result to his prayers—a result which, if it contradict tradition, does not, it is presumed, contradict poetical justice.]

KING Edward dwelt at Havering-atte-Bower—
 Old and enfeebled by the weight of power—
 Sick of the troublous majesty of kings—
 Weary of duty and all mortal things—
 Weary of day—weary of night—forlorn—
 Cursing, like Job, the hour that he was born.
 Thick woods environ'd him, and in their shade
 He roam'd all day, and told his beads, and pray'd.
 Men's faces pain'd him, and he barr'd his door
 That none might find him ;—even the sunshine bore
 No warmth or comfort to his wretched sight ;
 And darkness pleased no better than the light.

He scorn'd himself for eating food like men,
And lived on roots and water from the fen ;
And aye he groan'd, and bow'd his hoary head—
Did penance, and put nettles in his bed—
Wore sackcloth on his loins, and smote his breast—
Told all his follies—all his sins confess'd—
Made accusations of himself to heaven,
And own'd to crimes too great to be forgiven,
Which he had thought, although he had not done—
Blackening his blackness ; numbering one by one
Unheard of villanies without a name,
As if he gloried in inventing shame,
Or thought to win the grace of heaven by lies,
And gain a saintship in a fiend's disguise.

Long in these woods he dwelt—a wretched man,
Shut from all fellowship, self-placed in ban—
Laden with ceaseless prayer and boastful vows,
Which day and night he breathed beneath the boughs.
But sore distress'd he was, and wretched quite,
For every evening with the waning light
A choir of nightingales, the brakes among,
Deluged the woods with overflow of song.
“Unholy birds,” he said, “your throats be riven !
You mar my prayers, you take my thoughts from
heaven !”

But still the song, magnificent and loud,
Pour'd from the trees like rain from thunder-cloud ;
Now to his vex'd and melancholy ear
Sounding like bridal music, pealing clear ;
Anon it deepen'd on his throbbing brain
To full triumphal march or battle-strain ;

Then seem'd to vary to a choral hymn,
Or *De Profundis* from cathedral dim,
“*Te Deum*,” or “*Hosanna to the Lord*,”
Chanted by deep-voiced priests in full accord.
He shut his ears, he stamp'd upon the sod—
“Be ye accursed, ye take my thoughts from God!
And thou, belovèd saint to whom I bend,
Lamp of my life, my guardian, and my friend,
Make intercession for me, sweet St. John!
And hear the anguish of thy suffering son!
May nevermore within these woods be heard
The song of morning or of evening bird!
May nevermore their harmonies awake
Within the precincts of this lonely brake,
For I am weary, old, and full of woe,
And their songs vex me! This one boon bestow,
That I may pray, and give my thoughts to thee,
Without distraction of their melody;
And that within these bowers my groans and sighs
And ceaseless prayers be all the sound that rise.
Let God alone possess me, last and first;
And, for His sake, be all these birds accursed!”

This having said, he started where he stood,
And saw a stranger walking in the wood;
A purple glory, pale as amethyst,
Clad him all o'er. He knew th' Evangelist;
And, kneeling on the earth with reverence meet,
He kiss'd his garment's hem, and clasp'd his feet.
“Rise,” said the saint, “and know, unhappy king,
That true Religion hates no living thing;

It loves the sunlight, loves the face of man,
And takes all virtuous pleasure that it can—
Shares in each harmless joy that Nature gives,
Bestows its sympathy on all that lives,
Sings with the bird, rejoices with the bee,
And, wise as manhood, sports with infancy.
Let not the nightingales disturb thy prayers,
But make thy thanksgiving as pure as theirs ;
So shall it mount on wings of love to heaven,
And thou, forgiving, be thyself forgiven."

The calm voice ceased ;—King Edward dared not
look,
But bent to earth, and blush'd at the rebuke !
And though he closed his eyes and hid his face,
He knew the saint had vanish'd from the place.
And when he rose, ever the wild woods rang
With the sweet song the birds of evening sang.
No more he cursed them ; loitering on his way
He listen'd, pleased, and bless'd them for their lay,
And on the morrow quitted Havering
To mix with men and be again a king,
And fasting, moaning, scorning, praying less,
Increased in virtue and in happiness.



EVERMORE—NEVERMORE.

"WILT thou run to me for ever?"
 Said the ocean to the river.
 "Will ye ever fall on my hills and plains?"
 Said the dry land to the rains.
 "Will ye ever blossom while I sing?"
 Said the lark to the flowers of spring.
 "Will ye ever ripen while I shine?"
 Said the sun to the corn and vine.
 And ever the answer the breezes bore
 Was, "*Evermore—for evermore.*"

"As long as all these things shall be,"
 Said I, to Rosa kissing me,
 "Shall Truth be sharper than a sword?
 Shall kindness be its own reward?
 Shall a free heart smoothe the roughest way?
 Shall Hope shed light on the darkest day?
 Shall tempests spare the reeds that bow,
 And thou love me as thou lovest now?"
 And ever the answer her sweet lips bore
 Was, "*Evermore—for evermore.*"

"But shall I ever come back from thee?"
 Said the river to the sea;
 "Or I?" said the flower that Rosa threw
 Into its waters bright and blue.

"Will ye bloom again on the summer eves?"
Said the tree to its wither'd leaves.
"Wilt thou fall again when the north winds blow?"
Said the grass to the melting snow.
And ever the answer the breezes bore
Was, "*Nevermore—oh, nevermore.*"

"If such the rule beneath the skies,"
Said Rosa, gazing in my eyes,
"Shall duty quit the debt we owe her,
Or blisses fail the bliss-bestower?
Shall a miser's heart be improved by his gold?
Shall the wealth of Love be ever told?
Or thou prove false to the tender vow
Thou swearest and repeatest now?"
And ever the answer my true lips bore
Was, "*Nevermore—oh nevermore.*"



THE TRUE COMPANION.

GIVE me the man, however old and staid,
Or worn with sorrow and perplexity,
Who, when he walks in sunshine or in shade,
By woodland bowers, or bare beach of the sea,
O'er hill-top, or in valleys green, with me,
Throws off his age and gambols like a child,
And finds a boyish pleasure in the wild,
Rejuvenescent on the flowery lea!
Him shall the year press lightly as he goes;
The kindly wisdom gather'd in the fields
Shall be his antidote to worldly woes;
And the o'erflowing joy that nature yields
To her true lovers shall his heart inclose,
And blunt the shafts of care like iron shields.

WELCOME BACK.

SWEET songs of nightingale and lark
That greet the golden dawn,
Or twilight deepening into dark,
By mountain, grove, or lawn ;
Long days, clear nights, and balmy winds,
Fresh flowers and forest leaves,
Birds, blossoms, fruit of ruddy rinds,
New hay, and barley sheaves ;
All joys of nature, sounds or sights
Of forest, stream, or plain,
Ye're welcome, welcome, welcome ever,
And welcome back again.

Fair hopes, forgotten 'mid our toils,
Sweet visions dream'd of yore,
Calm thoughts effaced in life's turmoils,
Old songs we've sung before ;
Forgotten comrades, friends estranged,
Acquaintance o'er the seas,
Old feelings weaken'd, lost, or changed,
And youthful memories ;
Pure joys of home, kind words, sweet smiles,
And sympathy in pain,
Ye're welcome, welcome, welcome ever,
And welcome back again.

For Heaven is kind, and makes no stint
Of blessings, though we die ;
They pass in circles, and imprint
Their footsteps as they fly.
'Tis ours to train them when begun,
To keep the circle true,
And not neglect, forget, or shun
The old ones for the new.
Ne'er to the hearts that prize them well
They hold 'their course in vain :
They're welcome, welcome, welcome ever
And welcome back again.



A LOVER'S FANCIES.

- "*What sounds like pewter ?*" said my Rose in play—
"The fall of earth upon a coffin-lid."
"*Like tin ?*"—"The cock-crow heralding the day,
Or infant wailing that its mother chid."
"*Like steel ?*"—"The quick sharp twitter on the spray
Of numerous sparrows in the foliage hid."
"*Like gold ?*"—"The strong wind over forests borne,
Or full bass singer chanting prayer and creed."
"*Like brass ?*"—"The neighing of a frighten'd steed,
Or roar of people clamouring for corn."
"*Like iron ?*"—"Thunder-claps suddenly woken,
Startling the city in the summer night."
"*Like silver ?*"—"Thy sweet voice that speaks delight,
And breathes Love's promise, never to be broken."

THE NINE BATHERS.

"I WOULD like to bathe in milk,"
Said little Agnes, fresh and fair,
With her taper fingers smooth as silk,
Her cherry cheeks and nut-brown hair—
"In a bath of ivory, fill'd to the brim,
I would love to lie and swim,
And float like a strawberry pluck'd at dawn,
In the lily-white waves of milk new-drawn."

"And I," said Rose, with her eyes divine,
"Would love to bathe in the ruddy wine,
Trailing my long and coal-black locks
In purple clarets and amber hocks;
And I would have a fountain play
So that the wine might fall in spray,
And I might stand in the sparkling rain,
Statue-like in perfect rest;—
And if the droplets left a stain,
I'd have a fountain of champagne
To wash the purple from my breast;
And troops of slaves, in rich attire,
Should scatter myrrh and incense sweet,
And bring me, should my looks desire,
A golden ewer to wash my feet."

I'd tread on carpets of velvet woof,
My mirrors should reach from floor to roof,
And every slave should envy me
My loveliness and luxury."

"And I," said Jane, with her eyes' dark glances
Radiant with untold romances,
"Would choose a milder bath than thine,
Nor crumple my curls with fiery wine.
In a bath of alabaster bright,
In a marble-floor'd and lofty hall,
Transplendent with the regal light
Of a thousand lamps from roof and wall,
Amid exotics rich and rare
Filling with odours all the air,
In clear rose-water I would lie,
Like a lily on a lake serene,
Or move my limbs to the harmony
Of an orchestra unseen,
Placed in a chamber far remote,
And floating sing, and singing float."

"Sweet bath!" said the calm fair Margaret;
"But the bath I'd choose is sweeter yet.
I'd have it in a rich saloon
Open to the breeze of noon,
With marble columns smooth and high,
And crimson damask drapery,
Fill'd with statues chaste and rare
Of nymphs and gods divinely fair.
Of jet-black marble the bath should be,
With no white speck on its purity;

It should not flow with milk or wine,
With scented waters or with brine;
It should be fill'd with meadow dew,
Gather'd at morning in the grass,
'Mid harebell-cups and violets blue,
And my bath should be my looking-glass;
And I would have a score of maids
Glowing with beauty, each and all,
To twist my locks in graceful braids,
And dress me for a festival."

"And I," said Lilius, raising her eyes
Clear as morn, of passion full,
"Would love to bathe under Eastern skies,
In the palace gardens of Istamboul,
In the hanging groves of Babylon,
Or Bagdad, city of the sun,
'Mid orange, date, and trailing vine,
Palm, and myrtle, and eglantine;
I would have fifty fountains fair,
'Mid bowers of roses and evergreens,
And bathing in the odorous air,
I would be waited on by queens."

"And I," said Ann, with her drooping tresses,
And eyes as full of love's caresses
As the morning is of day,
And mouth so ripe and kindly smiling
'Twas never made to answer "Nay,"
"I would bathe in the fresh blue sea
With the wild waves sporting over me;
I would toy with the harmless foam,

Passing my fingers like a comb
Through the crest of each wave that rear'd
Its spray, as white as Neptune's beard ;—
With a fresh wind blowing across the reach,
I would dive and float again and again,
And dress myself on the bare sea-beach,
In a nook invisible to men."

"And I," said Laura, "would choose my bath
Where a river took its lonely path
On round smooth shingle, clear in its flow,
Showing the pebbles that slept below,
Through a flowery lawn well shaven and soft,
And cool to the feet. I would not care
For bands of music, if larks aloft
Fill'd with their songs the sunny air ;
I would not ask for lustres bright,
If the clear morning shed its light ;
Nor for marble statue of youth and maid,
If oaks and poplars lent their shade ;
Nor for exotics of choice perfume,
If the Meadow-sweet were fresh in bloom ;
I would but ask for a summer day,
And nearest eyes ten miles away."

"And I," said tuneful Isabel,
With her soft blue eyes and cheek vermeil,
With her witching smile and modest blush,
And voice to make the blackbird hush,
"I would not bathe by the sea-beach cold,
Nor river running through open wold ;
I would not bathe in halls of state,

In wine, or milk, or honey-dew ;
On me should no serving maidens wait,
Nor luxury my senses woo.
I would bathe far up in a Highland burn,
Hidden from sight in its every turn,
Deep embower'd 'mid pendent larch,
And silver birches poised on high,
With nothing alive to cross my path
But the bright incurious butterfly ;
In a limpid basin of the rocks
I would unbind my flaxen locks,
And lay my clothes on the mossy stone,
Happy—happy—and all alone."

"And I," said Geraldine, smoothing back,
From her stately brow, her tresses black,
A blush, like morning over the isles,
Dawning upon her cheeks, and smiles
Flashing about her lips and eyes,
Full of meanings and mysteries,
"I would love to bathe in a quiet mere,
As a mirror smooth, as a dewdrop clear,
So still, that my floating limbs should make
The only ripples upon the lake ;
I'd have it fringed with fruits and flowers,
Forests and orchards, groves and bowers,
That whenever I bathed in the noons of spring
I might pluck laburnums blossoming,
Or shake, as I floated, the lilac blooms,
Or chestnut-cones with their rich perfumes,
Over my glancing neck and shoulders,
Conceal'd in the leaves from all beholders,

Except from the ringdove—too intent
On her own pleasures to look at mine ;
And if I bathed when the flowers were spent,
And peaches blush'd in the autumn shine,
I would choose a solitary nook
By the confluence of a brook,
Where the apples were ripe, and the jet-black
cherries,
And the juicy luscious dark mulberries,
Or jargonelles of a ruddy gold,
And nectarines as sweet to taste
As the kisses of urchins three years old,
Grew within reach, that stretching in haste
My hand to the boughs as I floated near,
Or stood knee-deep in the lucid mere,
I might rustle and shake the pulpy treasure
Into the water for my pleasure,
Catching an apple as it fell,
Or diving for a jargonelle."

* * * * *



TWO MYSTERIES.

Two awful mysteries encompass me around,
 And follow me for ever as I go ;
 I see, yet see them not,—I know they *are*,
 And that they change more rapidly than thought,
 Yet feel 'mid variability, that change,
 While it affects them, leaves them still the same.
 Sane, I enjoy them both—both are myself ;
 Insane, I fly them, but they haunt me still ;—
 Two mysteries and yet one—one infinite,
 Two undistinguish'd points in space and time,
 Ever effaced and ever permanent ;—
 Two little atoms so magnificent
 That all the past conspired to give them birth,
 And all the mighty future hangs on one ;—
 My Self, my Now,—God's Self, God's Now ; so link'd
 That not Eternity can disentwine
 One from the other. Both to be employ'd
 So that their circle evermore shall stretch
 Till suns, and systems, and whole firmaments
 Shall seem but points commensurate with them,
 And aye to widen ever and evermore,
 Nearing the throne where the Eternal sits,
 Is joy, love, knowledge, happiness divine—
 Oh that the secret of their use were mine !

THE CONFESSION OF AHASUERUS.

I WAS betray'd, and cruelly undone,
Smitten to anguish in my sorest part,
And so disgusted with all human life,
That curses came spontaneous to my lips ;
I cursed the day—I cursed my fellow-men ;
I cursed my God that made so bad a world.
Goaded to frenzy by excess of pain,
I tore my hair,—I dash'd my bleeding head
Against a wall ; sobb'd, wept, and gnash'd my teeth.
I howl'd anathemas against myself
For being man, and living on the earth.
When suddenly a sweet and heavenly calm
Fell on my spirit ; and a mild clear light
Diffused itself about me where I stood ;
And I was conscious of a visible power
Unutterably great, divinely good ;
And a voice spake, not angrily, but sad :
*"Weak and unjust ! thou hast blasphemed thy God ;
God, whom thou knowest not. Thou hast malign'd
Thy fellow-men. Live, till thou knowest both !"*
The awful glory stole away my sense,
Th' excess of splendour dazzled my dim eyes ;
The clear words made me dumb ; and for a while
Torpid and clod-like on the earth I lay,
Till th' ineffable brightness disappear'd.

And when I waken'd, life was misery ;
Burden too mighty for my flesh to bear.
"Live till I know my God! That might I well ;
But live in sorrow till I know mankind?
Heavy the curse! But if it must be borne,
Let me gain knowledge quickly, and so die!"
Long did I live. One hundred years of time
I held the faith that all my people held ;
Observed their laws, and to a GOD of FEAR
Knelt down in awe and worshipp'd His derad name.
But still I lived, and cursed the weary days ;
And had no love or reverence for my kind.
And still my pain grew with my discontent,
That I could not release myself and die.

Youth in my limbs, but age upon my heart,
I roam'd the earth. I dwelt among the Greeks ;
I saw, well pleased, the majesty of life,
The power of beauty, and the sense of joy ;
The physical grandeur of the earth and heaven ;
But God himself was stranger to my thought ;
I had a worship, but no inward faith ;
I pray'd to gods of human lineament,
Emblems of natural forces and desires ;
I fill'd the woods with visionary shapes ;
Peopled the hills, the vales, the rocks, the streams,
The dark caves, and the sunny mountain-tops,
With forms of beauty ; and conversed with them
Upon unseen, unreal phantasies,
Until they seem'd so palpable to sight,
So like to men in passion, vice, and crime,
I loathed, and shudder'd, and abhorr'd them all ;

Nor knew in what abysm and hell of thought
To sink remembrance. And I lived—and lived,
Longer than hope ; and still I could not die.

Then far away into the burning East
I bent my steps. And at one drowsy noon,
Under a palm-tree shade, beside a well,
Sat down, and groan'd in bitterness of grief
That God was still an alien to my soul.
I cast my limbs upon the feverish ground
And lay upon my face ; and with my tears
Moisten'd the dust around me, praying still
That I might die ; for I was sere of heart,
Old, miserably old, and most forlorn.
Thus lay I from the noon into the night,
And from the night into the sudden dawn,
And all that day I batten'd on my tears.
When, lo ! there came a pilgrim by the way,
A pale, deject, and wiry-featured wretch,
With hands all sinewy, like a parrot's claws,
Thin lips, bright eyes, sunk cheeks, and grizzled hair.
There was a comfort in his hideousness,
As he sat down and gazed upon my grief,
And gave me pity, and contemptuous cheer.
"Brother," he said, "why what a fool art thou !
Neither in time, nor in eternity,
Neither in God, in nature, nor in man,
Is their aught worth the weeping of an hour.
'Tis good to run, but better far to walk ;
'Tis good to walk, but better to sit still ;
'Tis good to stand and wake, but better far
To lie and sleep, untroubled by a dream ;

'Tis good to be when thought has been destroy'd,
Better, far better, never to have been.
The grass is happy ; happier is the stone.
Highest of good is rest ;—rest so sublime,
So deep, so thorough as to seem like death.
Be Rest thy god. Let the winds moan, not thou ;
Let the skies weep, but shed not thou a tear ;
And sleep and fast thy troublous life away
In one most happy and incessant calm,
Till sweet annihilation blots thee out.
This is Religion, this the only Faith ;
Bliss is absorption—Heaven is nothingness."

He led me with his eye,—I follow'd him,
And I became a dull insensate lump,
And dozed in Buddha's temples night and day ;
I bruised in mortar of my selfishness
All thoughts, all feeling, all desire, all vice,
All virtue, into one amorphous mass
Of apathy, and idiotcy, and sloth.
How long I wallow'd in this senseless sty
I never knew ; I was but half alive,
And had no memory of time or change,
Only at intervals a grievous pain.

I was aroused at last, and scourged with whips,
Kick'd, beaten, spat on, cast into the mire.
Change had come o'er the places where I dwelt ;
There was new law for men, new faith for God.
The conqueror's sword had pass'd upon the plain,
And what was spared did homage for its life.
God and his Prophet were the lords of earth ;

And suddenly awaked, I found that I,
Even I, was living ; that the world was new
Though I was old, most lamentably old,
But still condemn'd to mingle with my kind,
And choose my faith. I did as others did,
Learn'd the new law, and thought I served my God.
I served him not. Obedience blind, inept,
Unthinking, dull, insensate was the law.
Fate lorded over Will ; Necessity
Turn'd men into machines. I cast my eyes,
Despairing still, upon the firmament,
Jewell'd with worlds, and reason'd with myself,
If Fate or Will upheld them in their place ;
And in the infinite madness of my brain,
Conceived that each, majestic as it shone,
Was fill'd with misery and doubt like mine ;—
A rolling hell set in the sky to preach
To other hells, as wretched as itself,
The dreadful power, the boundlessness of ill.
Long did I struggle with this deep despair,
And vehemently pray, both morn and night,
That I might be extinguish'd utterly ;
That I might lay upon the arid soil
My lifeless bones, to feed the hungry roots
Of hemlock or mandragora with lime ;
That I at least might end my doubts in death,
Though death were but the gate to other worlds
Of spiritual anguish more intense than this.

Another change came over me. Ere long
I wander'd forth o'er Asiatic plains ;
Dwelt with the lizard in the crumbling halls

Of antique cities desolate, whose names
Were lost from memory. I shared the tent
Of roving spearmen and banditti fierce,
So utter old and sad, that murderous thieves
Took pity on my want and misery,
And spake me kindly, even when they loathed.
I lay beneath the palms at set of sun,
And wish'd that ravenous and night-prowling beasts
Would tear me limb from limb before the dawn.
I cross'd great deserts in the burning heat,
Forded strong rivers, pierced through trackless woods—
A thing so utter sad, that the lean wolves
Fled terror-smitten when they met my glance,
And hungry serpents hiss'd and slunk away.

How long the madness burn'd, 'twere vain to
tell ;—

Time and Eternity seem'd one to me.
But in a bright and lovely summer's morn
I felt my limbs supple and strong again,
As in my youth, ere grief and I were friends.
Far had I journey'd to an eastern clime,
'Mid an old people and an older faith.
I found some comfort, yet I could not die.
Still was Obedience law : childish and calm,
Not to a blind and cruel destiny,
But to the wise irrevocable rule
Of a just Deity, that made mankind,
And sent his clay-vicegerents to the earth,
To rule them justly, if they would submit
To walk for ever in the same dull track,—
To live and act, from barren age to age,

In the same fashion, with the same desires,
Same thoughts, same habits, and same prejudice;
More dull and senseless than a stagnant mire,
That even in its rottenness and sloth
Breeds something novel from its fruitful slime :—
But they bred nothing, only their dull selves ;
And I despised them, hated them—and lived !
And knew by living I was still accursed,
And loved not God nor yet my fellow-men.

There was no resting here : my fiery soul
Felt mortal anguish to co-herd with theirs.
I went again a wanderer o'er the earth,
Taking no heed of time, or place, or change,
But weary, weary, abject and forlorn.

One year ago—'twas but one little year—
I enter'd, in my rags and squalidness,
A large fair city of the populous West :
The church-bells rang, the people were astir
In countless multitudes through all the streets ;
Gay banners flaunted in the morning air,
And waves of music, from the Gothic porch
Of a cathedral, rush'd in floods divine,
Now in full tidal flow, and now in ebb,
So grand, so awe-inspiring, that even I,
Despised, abandon'd, abject, and abhorr'd,
Felt holy joy to listen to the sound,
Which soothed my spirit with melodious peace.

I listen'd long ; for my sad heart was full.
I could have floated painlessly to death,

And bless'd the music with my latest sigh,—
But that a sudden plucking at the hem,
All mire-bedraggled, of my tatter'd robe,
Caused me to turn : I saw a fair young face,
Sweet even as hers who loved me in her youth—
She whom I now, for the first time, forgave
For wrongs inflicted on my trusting heart ;
Like—but unlike ; lovely—yet not so fair ;
And at my miserable feet she knelt
To crave my blessing :—"Blessing ! and from me !
From me, the vilest, meanest of mankind ?"
"Ay, and from thee !" she said ; "we know thee well,
Thou hast long suffer'd—thou'rt a saint of God."
And all the people, gathering round about,
Join'd in her supplication ; kneeling down,
To crave my blessing—not in mockery,
But with deep reverence. Strange it seem'd, that I,
Who had not known for spanless gulfs of time
What blessing meant, should have the power to bless !

I could not bless her, for I felt my heart
Glow with dear memories forgotten long,
Brought back upon me by her mild sweet face.
The burden of my long-enduring pain
Was lighten'd by that pity, and I wept ;
And every tear I shed became to me
Relief and joy, as, with an earnest voice,
I bless'd the people, showing them the while
My own unworthiness more great than theirs ;
Unmeet my lips to utter words of peace,
Who long had cursed myself and all my kind.

And now the hoary portals opening wide,
Forth issued an array of robèd priests,
In white and scarlet; boys with censers flung
Rich incense in the air, while others hymn'd,
With sweet clear voice, "Hosanna to the Lord!"
And all the people knelt, and with them I.
The solemn music fill'd the pliant air,
And a religious sense was wafted round,—
Sense superadded, and unfelt before.
I could not rise; my cramp'd and weary joints
Seem'd bloodless as the stones on which I knelt;
And the procession and the people pass'd
In all their gorgeousness; and I was left
To my own strength, to follow if I list,
Or lie upon the pavement and expire.

I rose. I felt within my secret soul
More peace than had been mine since the great
curse
Was spoken by the Presence for my sin.
But as I could not stay to be a saint,
And bear the flattery of the ignorant,
With a new courage I endued my heart,
And pray'd for strength, and went upon my way.

Here am I now. In thy serene abode,
I've gain'd new comfort from thy reverend lips,
And learn'd the secret of my destiny.
'Twas thou that taught me from the blessèd Book
That God is Love; and that those serve Him best
Who love their fellows, and obey the law,

Sublime but easy, preach'd by Him who died
To seal His doctrine by his guiltless blood.

I have not long to live. My race is run.
I would live longer, were it but to preach
To other souls as wretched as my own,
The mighty truth, that God is Love indeed;
But feel within me that mine hour is come.
I shall not see the morning dawn again;
My sin is pardon'd—I shall die in peace.

Bury me by myself—under a cross,
And put a fair white tombstone o'er my grave.
Place on it name, nor date, nor words, save these:
“He learn'd in suffering that God was Love,
And died in hope.” Bear with me for a while;
I shall not die ere I have slept an hour.
Mine eyes are weary, let me close them now;
I shall awake to bless thee and depart.
Visions of glory throng upon my soul:
Brother, farewell, I'll see thee yet again,
Here and hereafter. Let me slumber now.



A REVERIE IN THE GRASS.

HERE let me rest, amid the bearded grass,
Sprinkled with buttercups ; and idly pass
One hour of sunshine on the green hill-slope,
Watching the ridgèd clouds that o'er the cope
Of visible heaven sail quietly along ;
Listening the wind, or rustling leaves, or song
Of blackbird or sweet ringdove in the copse
Of pines and sycamores, whose dark green tops
Form a clear outline right against the blue :—
Here let me lie and dream, losing from view
All vex'd and worldly things, and for one hour
Living such life as green leaf in a bower
Might live ; breathing the calm, pure air,
Heedless of hope, or fear, or joy, or care.

Oh, it is pleasant in this summer time,
To sit alone and meditate or rhyme ;
To hear the bee plying his busy trade,
Or grasshopper alert in sun and shade,
With bright large eyes and ample forehead bald,
Clad in cuirass and cuishes emerald.
Here let me rest, and for a little space
Shut out the world from my abiding-place ;
Seeing around me nought but grass and bent,
Nothing above me but the firmament ;

For such my pleasure, that in solitude
Over my seething fancies I may brood,
Encrucible and moulded as I list,
And I, expectant as an alchemist.

Oh, beautiful green grass! Earth-covering fair!
What shall be sung of thee, nor bright, nor rare,
Nor highly thought of? Long green grass that waves
By the wayside, over the ancient graves,
Or shoulders of the mountain looming high,
Or skulls of rocks, bald in their majesty,
Except for thee, that in the crevices
Liv'st on the nurture of the sun and breeze;
Adorner of the nude rude breast of hills,
Mantle of meadows, fringe of gushing rills,
Humblest of all the humble, thou shalt be,
If to none else, exalted unto me,
And for a time, a type of joy on Earth—
Joy unobtrusive, of perennial birth,
Common as light and air, and warmth and rain,
And all the daily blessings that in vain
Woo us to gratitude: the earliest born
Of all the juicy verdures that adorn
The fruitful bosom of the kindly soil;
Pleasant to eyes that ache, and limbs that toil.

Lo! as I muse, I see the bristling spears
Of thy seed-bearing stalks, which some, thy peers,
Lift o'er their fellows, nodding to and fro
Their lofty foreheads as the wild winds blow,
And think thy swarming multitudes a host,
Drawn up embattled on their native coast,

And officer'd for war :—the spearmen free
Raising their weapons, and the martial bee
Blowing his clarion, while some poppy tall
Displays the blood-red banner over all.

Pleased with the thought, I nurse it for a while,
And then dismiss it with a faint half-smile.
And next I fancy thee a multitude,
Moved by one breath, obedient to the mood
Of one strong thinker—the resistless wind,
That, passing o'er thee, bends thee to its mind.
See how thy blades, in myriads as they grow,
Turn ever eastward as the west winds blow—
Just as the human crowd is sway'd and bent,
By some great preacher, madly eloquent,
Who moves them at his will, and with a breath
Gives them their bias both in life and death.
Or by some wondrous actor, when he draws
All eyes and hearts, amid a hush'd applause,
Not to be utter'd, lest delight be marr'd ;
Or, greater still, by hymn of prophet-bard,
Who moulds the lazy present by his rhyme,
And sings the glories of a future time.

And ye are happy, green leaves, every one,
Spread in your countless thousands to the sun !
Unlike mankind, no solitary blade
Of all your verdure ever disobey'd
The law of nature : every stalk that lifts
Its head above the mould, enjoys the gifts
Of liberal heaven—the rain, the dew, the light ;
And points, though humbly, to the Infinite ;

And every leaf, a populous world, maintains
Invisible nations on its wide-stretch'd plains.
So great is littleness! the mind at fault
Betwixt the peopled leaf and starry vault,
Doubts which is grandest, and, with holy awe,
Adores the God who made them, and whose law
Upholds them in Eternity or Time,
Greatest and least, ineffably sublime



LOVE OR WISDOM?

WERE I so mad as I have been of yore,
I would be happy: mad with beauty's eyes;
Mad with the voice of one I could adore,
And the sweet music of her soft replies:
Mad with the charms of a serene bright face;
Possess'd, and inly haunted, by the grace
Of some fair creature, in her form and mind
The star and paragon of all her kind.

For if I were so happy-mad again,
I'd live anew. I'd feed upon delights;
I'd find enraptured frenzy in a pain;
I'd roam, dreaming awake, through summer nights,
And hear a murmuring music in the air,
Which I would harmonize into a word—
That word her name. I'd kneel with forehead bare,
Out in the solemn woods, unseen, unheard,
And call on earth to bless her as she trod;
Sweet winds to fan her, skies to drop her joy;
And would invoke the providence of God
To keep her harmless, not let care annoy,
Nor sorrow vex, nor pleasure pall on sense;
My being hers, hers mine, and both intense

With a full, throbbing, rapturous, infinite bliss
In being loved. For madness such as this,
I'd give up wisdom and her castled clouds ;
I would unlearn all I have learn'd ; give back
Experience, and the blazoning breath of crowds
Wafting Fame's incense forward on my track.
I would forego all hope, and all desire
But one ; that life might be a blank white page,
Where Fate might write *one* word of heavenly fire—
Love : that so breathing the delicious rage,
My veins might run it, and my brain might take
That for sole impulse, and for Love's sweet sake
Nature put on her bridal robes, and blush
Beauty upon me from each tree and flower ;
And in her nightly gleam, her morning flush,
Her buzzing noon, and evening's golden hour,
Converse with me upon the one great theme
With all her voices ; meadow, mountain, stream,
Forest, and ocean, uttering but one sound
Ever and ever as the world went round,
The stars repeating it, with meanings rife,
And that word LOVE :—this would be living life !

For why? And wert thou in that fiery craze
So happy, that thou wouldst indeed recall
What thou hast seen, done, suffer'd in the days
When thy blood boil'd, and thou wert passion all?
Poor fool! forgetful of departed woes,
Past misery, anguish, discontent, and tears ;
Mindful alone of pleasure and repose,
Seen, through the wave of the refractive years,

In colours not their own. When LOVE was thine,
Wert thou not heart-sore? Didst thou not repine
For something that was past, or was to come?
Was not that day as wearisome as this?
Its music stale? Its friendly voices dumb,
And thou a dreamer of remoter bliss?
Poor fool! to-morrow thou wilt bless to-day,
And wish it back; and with a new disgust
Think of the newest time, till, fled away,
It leaves thee memory, and a fresh mistrust:
And so thou journeyest, thankless, to the dust.
Be not so mad as thou hast been of yore,
Yet happier far. Is not the now thine own?
Now ever present? *now* for evermore?
Now always with thee, but its worth unknown,
Or lightly thought of? Lay its mystery bare,
And learn the mighty secret how to live;—
Learn, that if mind be pure, the world is fair;
And that the outer sunshine cannot give
Such Warmth, and Joy, and Beauty, as the light
Cast by the inner spirit infinite,
When it is clear from every sensual stain.
Simple and thankful, live not thou in vain,
Nor hurry to the goal with desperate haste
To make the present past, and both a waste.



FOLLOW YOUR LEADER.

"Follow your leader!" So said HOPE,
 In the joyous days when I was young ;
 O'er meadow path, up mountain-slope,
 Through fragrant woods, I follow'd and sung ;
 And aye in the sunny air she smiled,
 Bright as the cherub in Paphos born,
 And aye my soul with a glance she wiled,
 And tinged all earth with the hues of morn.
 Long she led me o'er hill and hollow,
 Through rivers wide, o'er mountains dun,
 Till she soar'd at last too high to follow,
 And scorch'd her pinions in the sun.

"Follow your leader!" So said LOVE,
 Or a fairy sporting in his guise.
 I follow'd, to lift the challenging glove
 Of many a maid with tell-tale eyes.
 I follow'd, and dream'd of young delights,
 Of passionate kisses, joyous pains,
 Of honey'd words in sleepless nights,
 And amorous tear-drops thick as rains.
 But ah! full soon the frenzy slacken'd ;
 There came a darkness and dimm'd the ray,
 The passion cool'd, the sunshine blacken'd,
 I lost the glory of my day.

"Follow your leader!" So said FAME,
In the calmer hours of my fruitful noon.
O'er briery paths, through frost, through flame,
By torrent, and swamp, and wild lagoon,
Ever she led me, and ever I went,
With bleeding feet and sun-brown skin,
Eager ever and discontent,
As long as life had a prize to win.
But Dead-Sea apples alone she gave me,
To recompense me for my pain,
And still though her luring hand she gave me,
I may not follow her steps again.

"Follow your leader!" So said GOLD,
Ere the brown of my locks gave place to grey.
I could not follow—her looks were cold;
Icy and brittle was the way;
And GOLD spread forth her wiles in vain;
So taking POWER to aid her spell,
"Follow your leaders!" exclaim'd the twain,
"For where we go shall pleasure dwell."
I follow'd, and follow'd, till age came creeping,
And silver'd the hair on my aching head,
And I lamented, in vigils weeping,
A youth misspent, and a prime misled.

"Follow your leader!" I hear a voice,
Whispering to my soul this hour;—
"Who follows my light shall for ever rejoice,
Nor crave the perishing arm of POWER;

Who follows my steps shall for ever hold
A blessing purer than earthly love,
Brighter than FAME, richer than GOLD—
So follow my light and look above.”

’Tis late to turn, but refuse I may not,
My trustful eyes are heavenwards cast,
And ever the sweet voice says, “*Delay not,
I’m thy first leader and thy last.*”

’Tis the friend of my youth come back again,
Sober’d and chasten’d—but lovelier far
Than when in those days of sun and rain
She shone in my path as a guiding star.

She led me then, a wayward boy,
To things of Earth, and never of Heaven,
But now she whispers diviner joy,
Of errors blotted, of sins forgiven.

To a purpling sky she points her finger,
As westward wearily I plod,
And while I follow her steps, I linger,
Calm as herself, in the faith of God.



THE DEATH BANQUET OF THE GIRONDINS.

A FRAGMENT.

"The Girondins spent the last night of their captivity in the great dungeon—that Hall of Death. The tribunal had ordered that the still warm corpse of Valazé should be taken back to the prison, carried on the same cart with his accomplices to the place of execution, and buried with them. * * The gendarmes placed the body in a corner of the prison. The Girondins, one after the other, kissed the heroic hand of their friend. They covered his face with his mantle. 'To morrow!' said they to the corpse; and they gathered their strength for the coming day. It was near midnight. The deputy Bailleul, proscribed like them, but concealed in Paris, had promised to send them from without, on the day of their judgment, a last repast—of triumph or of death, according as they might be acquitted or condemned. By the help of a friend, he kept his word. The funeral supper was spread in the great dungeon. Costly viands, rare wines, flowers, and lights covered the oak table of the prison. * * The meal lasted till the dawn of day. Vergniaud, seated near the centre of the table, presided with the same calm dignity which he had preserved during the night of the 10th of August, while presiding over the Convention. The guests ate and drank with sobriety—merely to recruit their strength. Their discourse was grave and solemn, though not sad. Many of them spoke of the immortality of the soul and expressed their belief in a future state."—*Lamartine's History of the Girondins.*

"The last night of the Girondins was sublime. Vergniaud was provided with poison. He threw it away that he might die with his friends. They took a last meal together, at which they were by turns merry, serious, and eloquent. Brissot and

Genoué were grave and pensive. Vergniaud spoke of expiring liberty in the noblest terms of regret, and of the destination of man with persuasive eloquence. Ducos repeated verses which he had composed in prison ; and they all joined in singing hymns to France and Liberty."—*Thiers's History of the French Revolution.*

VERGNIAUD.

Never despair of goodness : men are bad,
But have been worse. The badness shall die out ;
The goodness, like the thistle-down, shall float,
Bearing a germ beneath its tiny car—
A germ predestined to become a tree,
To fall on fruitful soil, and on its boughs
Bear seed enough to stock the universe.
Never despair of Freedom : though we die
In cruel martyrdom most undeserved,
What matters it, if Truth survive our bones ?
No my dear brothers, we shall not despair,
Now or hereafter, for ourselves or men ;
For we are sorrow-proof ; our souls have borne
All the worst ills that can afflict the just.
We can sit down in strength of virtuous will,
And dare all malice and all power of men
To add one mental pang to bodily death,
Or rob us of the smallest privilege
That appertains to our humanity.
They may manure their gardens with our flesh,
And decompose our scaffolding of bones,
But cannot harm us, cannot touch the *I*,
The *Thou*, that dwells in clay receptacle,
Vast, awful, inaccessible, alone,
And indestructible as earth or heaven.

BRISSOT.

Would we could summon our poor Valazé
To visit us, and his forsaken corpse
Which bears us now such mournful company !
What secrets he could tell us if he might !
Perchance even now he listens to our words,
And shares our sorrows as he shared before.

SILLERY.

I do propose that in a solemn pledge
Over this wine we bear our love to him—
The soul of Valazé, if soul he have,
Outliving its poor garb of flesh and bone,
Or I, or thou, or any piece of dust
That walks on legs and calls itself a man ;
Here's to his memory !—and if he live,
May he be happy in the light of heaven !

BRISSOT.

Dear Valazé ! 'tis pleasant to my soul,
For soul *I* have, coeval with its God,
To think that he is with us at this hour ;
Fill'd with the virtuous joy that shall be ours,
Soon as the bloody knife has done its work
In opening the door 'twixt earth and heaven,
And letting us go free.

LASOURCE.

Free of the earth perhaps, but free as gods ?
To love, to know, to labour, to aspire ?

They say that Heaven is full beatitude,
Bliss infinite and yet a bliss complete,
Sum of all hopes and crown of all desire.
I would not pass into a stagnant heaven,
For ever singing psalms and saying prayers.
Ah, no! the heaven that my spirit craves,
If place it be, and not a state of mind,
Is place for progress—infinite as God.
There is no good but effort. Paradise,
With nothing to be done, would be to me
Worse than the blackest Hell that Dante drew,
Or English Milton in his awful song.

DUCOS.

What work wouldst do? Wouldst like to strive
in Heaven
With Robespierres or Dantons? or wouldst go
Down to the other place to battle there?

LASOURCE.

As for the other place, there is no Hell
But that which dwells in the ungodly soul—
A Hell eternal as the soul itself.
But for the virtuous and aspiring mind
There is no task more adequate to Heaven
Than war with Error. Light was only made
To change the alien Darkness to itself;
Love but to conquer and extinguish Hate.

CARRA.

I have two doubts; but to my tranquil mind
Each is a comfort. If perchance I go

Out of this body and remain myself,
I feel that God is good, and that this self
Shall not be damn'd, whatever bigots feign,
But shall enjoy the infinitude of love.
And if I go *not* hence—if I am *this*—
This bag of joints, and arteries, and flesh—
Nothing besides—and consciousness expires
When the lungs cease their functions, and the heart
Sends to the pulse the living stream no more,
There is nor disappointment, grief, nor pain,
In thought of nothingness. I've lived my life,
And can go down to Death without a pang,
And think annihilation bliss indeed.

DUCOS.

I not. I take an interest in things,
And would be glad to learn the fate of France,
For whose dear sake we die to-morrow morn ;
And if the "incorruptible" corrupt
And bloody Robespierre shall 'scape the toils
He sets for us. I should be glad to know
How long the savage hounds that lap our blood
Shall offer up such holocausts to Hate,
As we shall be ere shines another sun.
Nor that alone ;—I should rejoice to see
What great new poets shall arise with Time,
What famous plays and mighty play-actors
Shall draw the tears from lovely ladies' eyes,
Or dimple their sweet cheeks to heavenly smiles ;
What new discoveries shall yet be made,
Greater than printing or than gunpowder ;

And what shall be the fashion of men's beards
And young girls' petticoats a century hence ;
How long the French Republic shall endure,
And whether any Cromwell shall arise
To turn our troubles to his own account ;
Or, worst of all, whether the Capet race
Shall mount the throne again, to play the fool,
And drive humanity a century back ;
And whether Catholic and Protestant
Shall hate each other in the days to come,
And do foul murder for the love of God,
As they have done since Luther was a priest.

FONFRÈDE.

And so should I ; but not alone to know.
To see the miseries of this poor world,
Without the power to aid in their relief,
Would be indeed as bad as pitchy hell,
And worms that die not, and tormenting fiends.
No, no, Ducos ; if we return at all,
We shall return refresh'd, and play a part.

VERGNIAUD,

Keep to thy thought, Fonfrède, and lose it not ;
The soul, partaker of Divinity,
Must be partaker of Infinity—
Must know alike the secrets of all space,
And of this little grain of rolling sand
That we are born upon. Yes, we shall see,
Clear as a book, the riddle of the world ;
We shall repeat the watchword of the stars ;

We shall drink in divine enravishment,
As full upon us burst the harmonies
Of rolling planets, systems, firmaments.
The key-note of the music shall be plain,
And we shall strike it whenso'er we will,
And add to infinite Joy, Love infinite.

FAUCHET.

If we are worthy. Not to every soul
Such love and joy as thou depictest.
Freed from its earthly shell, th' eternal mind
Must struggle *there*, as it has struggled here,
Upward, still upward, with incessant toil,
To make itself partaker of the bliss,
That in a widening circle God hath spread
Through His ineffable eternity.

SILLERY.

Is talking, struggling? For I trust, dear friend,
There will be talking in the other world,
And that we twenty-one now supping here,
Discoursing mistily of earth and heaven,
Shall have a nobler banquet in the sky,
And better talk in better company,
To-morrow night ;—banquet of heavenly fruits,
Ambrosia, nectar, manna, wine of gods,
And converse with the mighty men of yore :—
Socrates, Plato, Buddha, Mahomet,
Homer, Anacreon, Euripides,
Ovid and Dante, Shakspeare and Corneille,
With Cæsar, Antony, and Constantine,

With Cleopatra, Hero, Helena,
Eve, and Semiramia, and Joan of Arc,
And a whole host of the undying dead—
Sages, philosophers, and ancient kings,
Bards, statesmen, actors, dancing girls, and wits,
And most beloved, our brother Valazé,
Gone as a herald to announce the doom
Of three times seven unconquerable souls,
Coming to join him ere the world goes round,
Or the next twilight deepens into day.

LASOURCE.

What ails our friend, our brother Vergniaud?
His gaze is fix'd upon vacuity—
He hears us not—he looks, but sees us not.
Kind sleep has thrown her mantle over him,
And in his slumber flow unbidden tears.

FONFRÈDE.

I could weep with him. Here we sit and talk
Of heaven and hell, unloosing knotty points,
Or grappling with them, but to make the coil
A worse entanglement—forgetting France,
And those who love us. I've not shed a tear,
But I could weep a flood, and in each drop
Pay tribute to my own humanity,
Which blushes for me, that I should forget,
In these last hours, my few, my faithful friends;
And she, the dear companion of my soul—
My love—my better life—that prays for me
In solitude and sorrow; or, perchance,

Watches outside these very walls, and weeps.
The tears are gathering in my eyes for her,
And they must flow, or make my heart a wreck.

VERGNIAUD.

Let the flood burst: tears are the wine of grief,
And will inspire thee more than sparkling Ai
Can stir the pulses of a bacchanal.
I crave no pardon for the tears I've shed,
The latest luxury that I shall taste.
In one short minute I have lived a life,
Felt all my joys, and suffer'd all my woes;
Loved all my loves, hoped all my hopes, despair'd
All the despairs that ever dull'd my sense;
Spoken my speeches, stirr'd a listening land
In name of freedom and the rights of men,
Ending this cosmorama of my days
By weeping on the breast of her I love
The tears you saw me shed—the tears whose flow
Refresh'd my heated brain, and bore me back
To consciousness of *now*, which I had lost.

GENSONNE.

Even so with me. I have been living lives
In minutes since our festival began.
Aye as the sands grows scanty in the glass
Of unrelenting Time, the falling grain
Exceeds in value all that went before,
And years of feeling load the back of each.

Five minutes past I was a little child—
I roam'd in meadows, gathering violets,
I bathed my tiny feet in running streams,
I strutted o'er the sward with martial drum,
I conn'd my painful lesson in the school,
I nestled in my little sister's breast,
And fell asleep, my arms entwining her.
And then I grew into a thoughtful boy,
Full of high projects and intense desires—
Passion and folly, wisdom and romance,
Ruling my soul by turns. Another grain
Dropp'd in the glass, and, lo! I was a man
Fill'd with ambition and desire of fame,
Raising my voice above the popular din,
To swell the rallying cry of ceaseless war
To royal tyranny and feudal wrong.
Another grain dropp'd through, and I was wed,
And lived long years of bridal happiness.
I built my house upon a hill; I plann'd
Gardens and orchards, parks and sloping lawns,
And fled from clash of modern politics
To ancient lore and calm philosophy.
Another grain, and all the visions fled.
I braved false judges in the judgment-seat,
Dishonouring judgment and the name of man;
Defied them to their teeth, and dared to die
And leave my fate a legacy to Time.
All this, and more, unwinding like a scroll,
Has pass'd before me at this feast of death,
Even as I talk'd, and drank, and laugh'd with you.
A double consciousness—an added self
Swathed me all o'er, as glory swathes a saint.

DUCOS.

Thy visions have been brave, dear Gensonné.
I have been thinking of my mistresses,
Eulalie, Marie, Gabrielle, Fifine—
Who loved me first—who last—and who the best;
And whether one of them to-morrow morn
Will give a last and solitary thought
To me, a man defrauded of my head,
Having no property in my own life,
And lost to them for loving liberty,
And daring to interpret for myself
What meant the name.

SILLERY.

Didst love the four at once? or two by two?
Or didst thou take the darlings one by one?
Or love this liberty still more than them?
In either case why should they weep for thee,
So loose and fickle in thy preference?
And yet 'tis sweet to know a woman sighs
For our distresses, and would share them all,
If sharing would relieve. Fill up again—
We grow lugubrious. *I*, that ever laugh'd,
Crutch-ridden and decrepit as I am,
At nightly comedy, and daily farce,
Play'd in all places—forum, palace, street,
In church and tavern, attic or saloon—
Must not be tragic, ev'n though dungeon-walls
Shut from my vision that stupendous farce,
The rolling earth. Fill to the brim your cups.
We'll toast our friends, our wives, our mistresses.

VERGNIAUD.

God bless the maid whose image fills my soul,
The incarnation of all purity—
All modesty—all loveliness—all grace,
My own heart's partner—my betrothed wife ;—
Never to see me in this mortal state—
Never to these pale, faithful lips of mine
To give the answering kiss of plighted truth !
God shower His blessings on her ! May she live,
Unscath'd, in all the perils of the time,
And love of me be thought no crime in her
By those who wield the destinies of France,
And slay the innocent !

FAUCHET.

Amen, Amen—for her, and all we love !

DUCOS.

We grow too serious. If we ransack thus
The stores of memory for joys bygone,
For hopes decay'd, and loves for ever lost,
We shall unman ourselves, and yield our breath
Like love-sick maidens, who in deep decline,
Aye prattle prettily of moonlit seas,
Fresh flowers, green meads, and shady forest-walks,
To the last moment of their artless lives.
In my philosophy there are no tears,
No sighs, no groans, no useless fond regrets,
But a stout heart, and laughter to the last.

(Sings.)

THE CAP AND BELLS.

Did you ever trust a friend,
And when cheated trust him more?
Ever seek to gain your end,
Knocking at a rich man's door?
Do you trust your Doris fair,
When her tale of love she tells?
You deserve the cap you wear,
Jingle, jangle—shake your bells!

Think you that the men are wise
Who embark in public strife?
Or their judgment do you prize
Who for country risk their life?
Truth's existence could you swear?
Or affirm where honour dwells?
You deserve the cap you wear,
Jingle, jangle—shake your bells!

FONFRÈDE.

The voice is good—the singer, my good friend—
The manner perfect, but the song itself
A baseless libel. Try again, Ducos,
And give us something in a nobler mood.
We may not die with falsehood on our tongues,
And gibes and sneers curvetting on our lips.

DUCOS.

If like a swan, I must expire in song,
Hear my death anthem. Join it if you will.

THE GREY OWL.

The grey owl sat on the belfry-leads,
And look'd o'er the Seine to the place of heads,
Over the Seine to the Place de Grève.

The winds were sighing, the trees replying ;

The moonlight stream'd o'er the abbey-nave,
Over the house-tops silently lying

White as the mist when the morn is new ;

And aye the owl, so solemn of look,

The speckled grey of his plumage shook,
And screech'd in the turret—tu wheet, tu whoo !

Clear and full the moonlight swam

Around the towers of Notre Dame,

And tinged on the Grève the guillotine—

The winds were sighing, the trees replying—

When a cry was heard the gusts between,
A moan for the dead, and not for the dying,
Dolefully sounding the faubourgs through.

'Twas the howl of a dog for his master slain,

And the grey owl flapp'd his wings again,
And screech'd in the turret—tu wheet, tu whoo !

He flapp'd his wings and away he lurch'd

Over the Seine, and, resting, perch'd

On the high cross-beam of the guillotine-top.

The winds were sighing, the trees replying—

The tail of the howling hound did drop
As he saw, through the pallid moonlight flying,
The doleful bird loom into his view ;

He ceased his moan and slunk away,
And the old owl rustled his pinions grey,
And screech'd from the scaffold—tu wheet, tu whoo !

"Hurra !" quoth he, as the creature ran ;
"What right have dogs to moan for man,
Or of love like this to make pretence ?"
The winds were sighing, the trees replying.
"Such canine truth is a foul offence ;
For if every fool on the guillotine dying,
Had a friend like this to howl and rue,
Their noise would drown the people's roar
When it tasted blood and clamour'd for more."
And the grey owl screech'd—tu wheet, tu whoo !

"I wot that to-morrow's sun shall see
The death of a goodly company—
I trust no dogs will howl for them."
The winds were sighing, the trees replying.
"Two-and-twenty we condemn—
One has escaped from the shame of dying,
Open'd a door and glided through ;
Yet two-and-twenty heads in all
Under the bloody knife shall fall."
And the grey owl screech'd—tu wheet, tu whoo !

"Many shall follow them day by day,
The harvest-time shall not delay—
The headsman's harvest, so ripe, so red."
The winds were sighing, the trees replying—
"I know the name of each sentenced head—
Danton, the harsh and death-defying—

All his friends that think him true—
 Brutal and greedy Père Duchésne,
 With all his comrades, all his train."
And the grey owl screech'd—tu wheet, to whoo!

"And after a while a greater still
 Shall tread the road, shall climb the hill,
 Amid the shouts of the changeful crowd"—
The winds were sighing, the trees replying.
 "And shall headless sleep in a bloody shroud.
 Hated in life, accursed in dying,
 He shall meet the doom of the twenty-two;
 And his name shall live the world to scare—
 'Tis Robespierre! 'tis Robespierre!"
And the grey owl screech'd—tu wheet, tu whoo!

SILLERY.

Who is your owl, Ducos?—the embodied soul
 Of Marat visiting the earth again?
 Whoe'er he be, his prophecies are safe,
 And through the glooms of Time his eyes can see
 About as clearly as some men's, I know.
 'Tis a brave bird, Ducos, and speaks the truth,
 'Although his voice is harsh, his truth a fear,
 And deeds of blood his too familiar thought.

LASOURCE.

Behold the dawn: it breaks upon the world.
 How at this hour the oceans sport their waves,
 And turn their frothy ringlets to the light,
 And all the peaks of Alps and Apennines

Catch on their snowy heights the ruddy gold,
The silver, and the purple, and the grey,
And all the glory of its majesty.
The ancient forests shake their lordly boughs,
And pay obeisance to the rising morn ;
The green fields smile, dew glistening, in its face ;
The distant towns and villages awake,
The milk-maid sings, the cow-boy winds his horn,
And lowing cattle climb the sunward hills.
The twin grey towers of ancient Nôtre Dame
Are gilded with a smile, like hoary age
Relaxing to behold an infant's play.
Ay, even the gory guillotine receives
The splendour of the morning, and the slave
Drinks of the sunshine freely as the free.
What beauty compasses the teeming world !
What hideous spectacles ungrateful men
Throw in its face, to tire it of itself !
Beautiful morn ! my blessing upon day !

SILLERY.

And mine—if worth acceptance. But behold,
The gaoler comes—our feast is at an end ;
The death-bell tolls. Time fades to nothingness ;
The hideous dream of life draws to its close ;
The morning of Eternity is near.
Let us arise and wake like healthful men.

FAUCHET.

May God have mercy on us, and forgive
Our enemies, as we forgive them now.

VERGNIAUD.

Farewell, dear brothers—farewell, friends beloved.
The victims of a fearful tyranny
We die, but leave our names an heritage
That France shall wear, and boast of to the world.

THE END.

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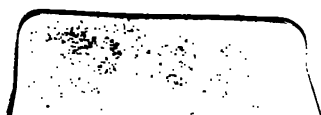
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